

TONY



ELIZA ORNE WHITE

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Eliza Orne White

LIKE some of Miss White's earlier stories, this is for and about really little children. Tony and his twin sister Laura live sometimes in the suburbs and sometimes in a seashore cottage with their mother, who is a widow. There is also in the house a young aunt who sings and teaches music, Sandy, the cat, and Perry, the Airedale. During the year that the story covers, the children learn to swim and skate, celebrate their birthday, get separated and lost in the city, make new friends, and enter Laura's best doll in a prize contest.

All of the characters are natural and attractive, and the twins themselves are especially delightful, such companions as every child should have. Miss White, one of the best and most charming writers about childhood, has never shown her gift more happily than in "Tony."

Frontispiece in color by Alice B. Preston.

TONY



Y ELIZA ORNE WHITE



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TONY



BY · ELIZA · ORNE · WHITE ·
ILLUSTRATED BY ALICE B. PRESTON
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TO
LUCY B. HEYWOOD
AND HER NEPHEW
ANDERSON PAGE

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¹ This story, in a shorter form, first came out in *The Kindergarten Review*.

TONY



CHAPTER I

THE DEPARTURE

TONY was standing on the doorstep with his cap in his hand. He was watching the men as they took the trunks down, one by one, to the baggage wagon. The trunks seemed almost as different as the people. They were taking down his Aunt Laura's trunk now. It was new, and shiny like Aunt Laura herself. She was very pretty. She had shiny yellow hair, and she wore shiny clothes for best. But somehow she never looked so nice to Tony as his mother did, in her oldest clothes. His aunt was rather short and plump, and his mother was tall with a straight, strong figure, and dark brown hair, and gray eyes.

"Come, Tony, don't be wool-gathering," said his aunt briskly. "We'll have to be starting soon. Go and wash your hands. They look as if you hadn't washed them for a week."

Tony did not move. He was waiting for some

command from his mother. How he hated to go home! Why couldn't they live all the year round by the sea? It was a real village, and some people were so lucky as to live there all the year round: Miss Prince, the postmistress, for instance, and his friends the fishermen.

Tony, who was six and a half, was a size smaller than his twin sister, who was large for her age. But he felt much more grown up in his mind than Laura. Perhaps it was because since his father had been killed overseas he had been the man of the family. Tony could hardly remember his father, who had gone to the war so long ago. He could just remember a big, strong man, who liked the sea and outdoor things.

Once more Tony looked out to the sea. How could one go home when it was pounding away on the stony beach like that? He could see the white spray from the breakers dashing up on the rocks, like streamers in the air, and hear the crunching noise of the stones as the waves slipped back. There would be glorious surf on the Point. The gulls were flying across the blue sky. They looked even whiter than the clouds. Oh, if he could only stay one day more!

Laura was sitting comfortably on the side

seat of the front porch. She was a plump, sturdy child, with yellow hair like her aunt's. She was all ready for the journey, and so was the doll that was clasped in her arms.

"Don't you hate to go back, Laura?" Tony asked.

"No, I don't," said Laura. "It's lots warmer in the house at home, and everybody's gone back now."

He might have known Laura would be glad to go home, Tony thought. She was always ready for a change.

"Tony," said his mother, "go and wash your hands."

There was no escape this time. Tony gave one wistful backward glance at his mother's strong figure in her black tweed suit.

"Mother, don't you wish we were going to stay a little longer — just you and I?" he said.

"Yes, Tony, I do," came the quick response. "It would be heavenly to stay — just you and I. But I don't see how we can."

A little later Aunt Laura got out the cat basket.

"Tony, you look like a little gentleman now," she said as she looked at his well-scrubbed hands.

Tony did not care in the least about looking like a little gentleman, and, besides, it seemed of very little use to wash his hands when they would so soon be covered with grime from the train. Still, he was glad he had pleased Aunt Laura. She was not easy to please.

"Tony, you might put Sandy into the basket now," said his mother.

The cat had been shut up in a small room near the kitchen so as to be ready for the journey. He had not liked to be shut up, and even his milk and fish had not served to pacify him. He had mewed loudly at first, but they hadn't heard him for some time. When Tony looked in the small room, there was no cat to be seen. The men who came for the trunks must have opened the door by mistake. The cat had escaped. Tony recognized this fact with a rush of joy. They couldn't leave without Sandy. It would mean they would stay at least one day more.

"Mother, I can't find Sandy," he said.

"You can't find Sandy? Of course you can," said his aunt.

They looked the whole house over, and they all four went in different directions calling him. It was no use. Sandy was not to be found. Oh,

the joy of being a cat! Tony thought. If he had only been a cat himself, he, too, could have made a dash for freedom.

"The taxi will be here in a minute," said Aunt Laura as she looked at her wrist watch. "Tony, you will have just time to run up to Mrs. French and ask her to look out for the cat. I know she won't mind keeping him for us."

Tony did not move. He wondered how Aunt Laura would like to be treated in this way herself. He did not say anything, however. It was little Laura who spoke. She seldom kept her feelings to herself.

"Aunt Laura," she protested, "Sandy is one of the family. We can't go off and leave him behind."

Just then the taxi that was to take them to the train stopped at the gate.

"We'll have to," said Aunt Laura. "Come, Tony, hurry, run up to Mrs. French."

"Mother," pleaded Tony.

Mrs. Marsh hesitated.

"The cat may not come back for days. It's his own fault. He deserves to be left behind," said Aunt Laura.

"We might stay over another train." Mrs. Marsh was wavering.

"And send the taxi away? I am going back in this train," said Miss Marsh firmly.

"I am going, too," said her small namesake.

Then a bright idea came to Tony. "Mother, couldn't we let them go home, and you and I stay one day more? I'm sure Sandy will come home the first thing to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Marsh looked toward the sea which was breaking on the stony beach. A gull flew across the blue sky. She remembered how she and Tony's father used to watch the surf at the Point after a storm. It would be next best to living those days over again to be here with Tony.

"You and Laura can go back; and Tony and I will bring Sandy home to-morrow," she said.

They stood watching the taxi drive away. Aunt Laura was still protesting. They were gone at last, back into that world of pavements and suburban houses. And Tony and his mother were to have one more blissful day by the sea.

CHAPTER II

ONE DAY MORE

THEY looked at each other. They felt free as air.

“We can do just what we please!” said Tony.

“Yes,” said his mother, “I’ll let you choose.”

“Mother,” he said, taking hold of her hand, “I want you to choose.”

“What do you say, Tony, to a walk over to the Point, to watch the surf?”

“Mother, dear, that’s just what I wanted, too. Can we have a picnic? Can we take our dinner?”

Mrs. Marsh stopped in comical dismay. “We haven’t one thing in the house, not a scrap. We’ll have to go into the village and buy some food. What a waste of time!”

“Not a waste of time, for we can say good-bye again to all our friends.”

“To be sure, we can. How stupid of me to forget that.”

“Mother, don’t you think we ought to leave the back door open in case Sandy should come home?”

"I don't like to leave the door open while we are out of the house. I don't think he'll come back until to-morrow morning."

"If he didn't come back for days and days, as Aunt Laura said, could we stay on?"

"Certainly not."

"For a week?"

"No."

"For three days?" — and he gripped her hand.

"We have to-day, Tony. When you get as old as I am and look back, just one day will mean more than other weeks."

"Yes, I'll always remember to-day, if I live to be a very old man — if I live to be fifty."

They walked down to the village grocery-store, and bought crackers and cheese, and chocolate and figs and dates for their lunch and supper. Tony was dazzled at the prospect of such a meal. They stopped at the post-office to say good-bye to the postmistress. It was the third time Tony had said good-bye to her.

"So you are not off yet?" said she.

"Part of the family are," said Tony, "but mother and I had to stay behind because Sandy ran away."

"Sandy? I didn't know you had a brother."

"He isn't exactly a brother," said Tony.
"He's the cat."

As they passed the house where Tony's friend Mat Griffith lived, Tony saw that he was in the yard mending a sail.

"Hullo," said Tony.

"Hullo," said the old man, looking up from his work. "So you ain't gone yet?"

"No, we stayed over on account of the cat."

"Bless my soul!" said Mat, with a chuckle, "that is putting animals ahead of humans. So you stayed over to please the cat?"

"We stayed over to please ourselves," said Tony. "But we stayed for the cat, because he didn't come back."

They had to stop so often to speak to Tony's friends that it was almost lunch-time before they reached the beach. Tony liked better to go across the beach than by the path, and, although he let his mother choose, she always seemed to like the same thing. How the wind blew as they went along the beach! The black veil on his mother's hat stood out like a sail. The breakers rushed up on the beach higher and a little higher, for the tide was coming in. The other end of the beach was more sandy.

There was a rim of brown seaweed along the edge to mark the high tide. Tony and his mother sat down to eat their luncheon, and to count the waves, for Mat Griffith had said the seventh was always higher, and Tony wanted to see if it were really so. Sometimes it was higher and sometimes it wasn't. Tony was absorbed by the counting. Finally they went on to the rocks. It was a hard scramble, just the kind of a scramble Tony liked best. At first they sat high up above the surf. It came crashing and pounding in, dashing itself against the rocks, and then rising high in the air, a column of spray.

"Mother," said Tony, gripping her hand, "think what we should have missed if it hadn't been for Sandy!"

He wanted to go down nearer to the water. It seemed safe enough, so they went down a little nearer. The waves were a wonderful shade of green before they broke.

"Mother, they are just the color of your ring," Tony said.

Some white gulls flew by overhead, and landed on a rocky island. It was all very exciting.

"What a pity Laura is missing it," Tony

said, as he thought of his small sister. "But it is nice being here, just by our two selves." He let go his mother's hand and went down to a lower rock.

"Come back, Tony, you'll get wet."

Tony never knew whether it was the seventh wave or not, for he had stopped counting. It was a huge one. Tony saw it coming like a great wall of green. It broke on the rocks below them. He tried to run back. Then he was caught in his mother's arms. They were above the point where there was any danger of being washed away, but not beyond reach of the spray. It came down on them like a great cloudburst of rain. They were both of them drenched to the skin. Tony began to laugh.

"Mother, you look so funny with the rain dripping off your nose, and your veil like a string, and your dress all wilted!"

As they made their way back across the beach, facing what now seemed like an icy wind, Tony said, "Aunt Laura wouldn't have liked it if she had got her pretty dress spoiled."

"If you think I like it, Tony, you are very much mistaken. But it would not have happened to your Aunt Laura. She's got too much sense to go so near."

"Yet, she's a lot younger than you are, mother."

"Yes, she is."

"She isn't half so nice," said Tony. "Mother," he added, with a grown-up air, "I think it is a misfortune to have too much sense."

"I'm afraid there is a pair of us, Tony. We don't either of us seem to have that misfortune to-day."

It was lucky they had eaten their luncheon before the accident happened, but they had had enough food left for supper. Now they would have to get a fresh supply, for everything had been ruined by salt water.

"Anyway, you were going to get bread and butter and milk," said Tony. "Mother, isn't it lucky there is some wood so we can have a fire and get dry?"

"Yes, it's very lucky."

They stopped at Mrs. Grover's for the milk. Like everybody else, she said, "So you're not gone yet?" She took them straight to her motherly heart. She made them take off their wet clothes, and put on dry ones. Tony thought his mother looked very funny in a dress that was made for Mrs. Grover, who was

short and fat. But this was nothing compared to the way he looked in a pair of Mr. Grover's pajamas and one of his coats. It was warm and comfortable by the kitchen stove. The Grovers insisted on their staying to supper, and they had ham and eggs and doughnuts and milk.

When their clothes were dry, and they went home at last, Mrs. Grover insisted on their taking back a loaf of her bread and a pat of butter and some doughnuts, as well as the milk.

"I wonder if Sandy will have come home," Tony said.

When they reached the house there was Sandy waiting patiently at the kitchen door, to be let in. He was the sort of cat that is called red, although Tony could not see why, for he was bright yellow, with darker stripes that were almost orange. He had a white shirt front and four white paws; and Aunt Laura was always making remarks about his not washing himself often enough. Tony was glad Aunt Laura was not here now. Sandy looked quite as much the worse for wear as he did himself. It was evident that Sandy, too, had had adventures.

"Sandy," said Tony, "I hope you've had as wonderful a day as we've had."

Sandy blinked and said, "wroof, wroof," in a pleasant way. He, too, seemed quite content to sit before the fire of driftwood in the living-room.

CHAPTER III

PERRY AIREDALE

THE next day Mrs. Marsh and Tony and Sandy left the seashore and went back to their other home, where Aunt Laura and little Laura were waiting for them. Tony liked the journey in the steam-car. He sat next the window and talked to his mother about what he saw. But Sandy did not like the journey at all. A cat basket is so confining! He made a great many remarks. He gave loud wails, er-er-er, as if he were tuning a violin. But when they got back to their own door steps and little Laura opened the front door and darted out to fling her arms about Tony's neck, everybody felt it was very good to get home. Tony forgot all about the blue sea breaking on the beach and the salt tang to the air. He was delighted to see Laura, although he had not missed her at all; and she was delighted to see him, for she had missed him very much.

Aunt Laura had a bright fire on the hearth in the sitting-room, and such a good dinner for them; for there was nothing Aunt Laura

could not do if she tried. And Sandy had a good dinner, too. He drank three saucers of milk, and he ate so much fish that Mrs. Marsh had to go out and buy more, so there would be enough in the house to last him over Sunday. Tony and Laura told each other everything that had happened since they parted, for the day they had been separated seemed a long one.

“The favorite caller came last night,” said Laura. “And isn’t it too bad? He is going to California to stay until next summer.”

“Oh, dear!” Tony groaned, “how dreadful! What shall we do without Lieutenant Perry? And I suppose he will take Perry Airedale with him.”

Many people came to see their Aunt Laura now that she had got home. In the first place, there were her music scholars. Some of these were grown up, and some were children. Tony and Laura thought it very hard that when they came the parlor door was always closed. And Sandy thought it very hard, for there was a special chair in the parlor for him, with a soft blanket in it; and there was a soft piece of velvet on the top of the upright piano, and everybody knows what a good place the top

of an upright piano is for a cat, if it is near a window. It is as good as the top of a refrigerator. So Tony and Laura and Sandy were never at all glad when a music scholar came.

But there were plenty of other callers, and when these came the folding doors were always left open, and any one could go in. Laura always went in to find out who the caller was, and she would come back and report to Tony. He was too shy to venture in unless the favorite caller came.

"There's a caller," said Laura one evening. "Aunt Laura has let him in. I do believe it is the favorite caller," and she slipped down from her chair.

"Don't go in and interrupt your aunt," said her mother, looking up from her check-book, which she was trying to balance.

"Lieutenant Perry will be disappointed if he does not see me," said Laura.

"Laura!" her mother called again. But the little girl was already at the parlor door. She came back quickly.

"It is only Mr. Miles," she said. "He's no good."

"He's an old fool," said Tony.

"My dear little boy, you mustn't say such

rude things," said his mother. "And, besides, it isn't true. Mr. Miles is almost as young as your Aunt Laura, and he is a very bright young lawyer."

"I don't think he's very bright," said Tony. "Every time he sees me he asks me how old I am. If he's very bright I should think he could remember an important thing like that."

The children were very happy on the nights when the favorite caller came. He almost always brought something for them. It was usually candy, but sometimes it was an orange apiece. And he seldom failed to bring catnip for Sandy. It was not because he brought them something that the children liked him so much. They had liked him from the first minute they saw him, before he ever brought them a present. They liked him because he was himself.

"Why do you like Lieutenant Perry better than any of my other callers?" Aunt Laura once asked the children.

"He's got kind eyes," said Tony.

"He's always pleasant," said Laura.

"He's 'most as good to play with as another boy," said Tony, "and he lets Sandy scratch his trousers."

They had this talk before Lieutenant Perry began to bring his friend with him. At the seashore, where he had a cottage near theirs, when the weather was warm he left his friend outside the door. But now that they had come back to town and the evenings were cold, Aunt Laura asked him to bring him in. The friend was even a greater favorite with the children than Lieutenant Perry himself. The friend seemed warm and comfortable enough in his rough coat with the black blanket on his back. He had brown legs, and wore a leather collar around his neck. The first time he came in, Tony had given him a cracker, and now he looked for it every time.

"What is his name?" Laura had asked.

"Rascal."

"That isn't any name at all for a dog who is so much of a person," Tony burst out. "Hasn't he any other name?"

"He's an Airedale."

So the children decided to call him Perry Airedale.

"And, by the way," said Lieutenant Perry, "please drop the Lieutenant off my name. I'm just Mr. Perry. The war was over a long time ago, and I'm not a West Pointer."

This evening when Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale called, the children were in the dining-room after supper with their mother when they heard the front door open.

"It's Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale!" said Laura joyously.

"Now, children, sit still and let Aunt Laura have her caller to herself. You don't know who it is."

"Yes, I do," said Laura, "I heard him bark."

Laura made a dash for the door. Her mother flew over to her and held her by the skirt.

"One would think Aunt Laura's callers came to see you," she said severely.

"They do — Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale do. They'd be terribly disappointed not to see me and Tony. Perry Airedale is always looking for his crackers; and I know Mr. Perry has brought us a present, because he is going away so soon."

"If he has a present for you, he will look you up, you can be sure of that," said their mother. "If it is Mr. Perry who has come, he has come to say good-bye to us all, for he is going to California next week."

"How dreadful!" cried the children.

"It isn't dreadful. He is going to a beautiful place where he has relatives. He hopes to get rid of his cough; and he will paint some pictures."

"It will be dreadful for Perry Airedale," said Tony. "I don't believe he's got any relatives there."

"Mother, mayn't I go in for a minute?" begged Laura.

"No, dear."

"Not a teenty-tinty minute?"

"No."

"Half a minute?"

"NO."

"A second?"

"Laura, sit down and go on with your knitting."

"Mother," said Laura excitedly, "if Mr. Perry is going to California, I'll have to give him a present. I'll give him a wash-cloth I've knit myself."

"You'll have to work day and night to finish that one."

"Mother," said Laura, "I'll give him the one I gave you on your birthday, and I'll finish this one for you. You've never used it. You said it was too precious."

"But don't you think it is too precious to be given away?"

"I'll give you this one."

"I see. Well, dear, if you and Tony will be good children and not go into the parlor until you are sent for, I'll go up and get the wash-cloth. I'm sure Mr. Perry will be glad to have a piece of your work."

"I haven't anything to give him," mourned Tony.

"You might give him your jack-knife," said Laura.

"You bet I won't."

When Mrs. Marsh came downstairs with the wash-cloth that Laura had knit, the little girl could hold back no longer.

She ran to the parlor door and called out, "I have a present for you, Mr. Perry. I made it myself."

"A present? That's great," said Mr. Perry, getting up to shake hands with her.

He seemed very tall and soldierly as he looked down at Laura, and the little girl seemed very small indeed, as she looked up at him.

Perry Airedale looked bigger than usual, for he got up on his hind paws and put his front

ones on the little girl's shoulders. He licked her face with his rough tongue.

"He's kissing me!" Laura cried in delight.

"May I have a kiss, too?" said Mr. Perry.

"Yes. Here is your going-away present, Mr. Perry," said Laura. "I made it all myself," and she handed him the wash-cloth. "At least I made it all except the border. Aunt Laura made the scallops."

"Did she?" He looked at the border with interest. "Now I shall have a specimen of the work of both of you. How good of you to knit it for me."

"I didn't knit it for you," said Laura. "It is mother's birthday present, but I'm making her another one. I knit two wash-cloths — twins; and every time mother saw me knitting, she thought it was Aunt Laura's, and when Aunt Laura saw me, she thought it was mother's. Their birthdays come close together."

"Where's Tony?" said Mr. Perry, a little later.

Tony was giving Perry Airedale his crackers in the dining-room.

"Come, Rascal!" said Mr. Perry, as he whistled to his dog.

"I think that is a dreadful name," said the little girl.

"You can christen him over if you like."

"We have. We call him Perry Airedale, and Perry for short."

When Tony and the dog came back, Mr. Perry said, "You have heard that I am going on a long journey?"

"Yes," they said.

"We are so sorry," said Laura.

"I'm afraid Perry won't like traveling," said Tony.

"That is what I'm afraid of," said his master, "and so, if your mother doesn't mind, Miss Laura here says she doesn't —"

"Oh," said little Laura, who was always quicker to catch an idea than Tony, "you are going to leave him with us?"

Tony was speechless. This seemed too wonderful a thing to be true. The children ran out into the dining-room to tell their mother the good news.

"Darling mother," said Laura, "Mr. Perry has given us Perry Airedale to keep until he gets back!"

"If you will let us have him," said Tony. "He said for us to ask you."

"My dear children," said Mrs. Marsh, "didn't you stop to think about Sandy, and how he hates dogs?"

"He'll have to learn to like Perry," said Tony.

"Aunt Laura said we could have him," said Laura.

Mr. Perry had not yet left the house, and the children knew it was possible that their mother might take their visitor by the collar and march him back to his master.

"Mother, dear," pleaded Tony, "I've never had a dog."

"No," said Mrs. Marsh, "I never meant you should have one while we have a cat."

"Wasn't father fond of dogs?" Tony asked.

"Yes, Tony, he was very fond of them. We always had one, but after old Bruno died, I never had the heart to have another."

As if he knew what they were talking about, Perry Airedale came over to Mrs. Marsh and put his paws in her lap. Then he gave her a kiss with his rough tongue.

"Mother," pleaded Tony, "see how he loves you! He's asking to stay. He hasn't any relations in California, and he'll hate the journey."

"But think how unpleasant it will be for poor Sandy. He has a dreadful temper. He hates dogs."

"He'll have to learn to keep his temper," said Tony.

Mrs. Marsh had known all along that she should let the children keep the dog. To have made them give him up would be too cruel. But she wanted them to realize the situation, and be ready to help her out. She knew whoever owned the dog she would be the one to have the real care of him.

The children went back into the parlor followed by Perry Airedale. Tony stooped to stroke Perry's head. What wonderful bliss to have a dog of his very own; — well, not quite his own. He belonged to Laura, too. But Laura would never bother to feed him. He would be more his than Laura's.

"I speak for his head," said Laura.

"That isn't fair," said Tony.

"I spoke for the head," said Laura.

"Very well, you'll have to feed him," said Tony. "If he starves it won't be my fault."

"Children, don't quarrel," said Aunt Laura.

"We weren't quarreling," said Laura.

As usual, Tony said nothing, but he won-

dered how a grown person could say such a foolish thing.

"I am going to divide him right down the middle, from stem to stern," said Mr. Perry. "Tony, you can have his left side, and Laura the right."

The children laughed delightedly. "And remember, if he is too much trouble to Mrs. Marsh, and doesn't get on with Sandy, and you get tired of him, you can board him out until I get back."

"He needn't be any trouble to Mrs. Marsh, for I'll take care of him; and we shan't get tired of him," said Aunt Laura. "A dog is almost like a person."

The next morning when Sandy saw Perry, he set up a heartrending cry. It was his long wail, that sounded as if he were tuning a violin — "Ah, ah, ah, ah," went Sandy. "Bow, wow, wow," went Perry.

"What shall I do?" said Mrs. Marsh. "Come, Laura," she called to her sister-in-law, "if you will feed Perry in the dining-room, I'll take Sandy into the kitchen. If we can only keep them apart, we can manage." She picked up Sandy as she spoke. He tried to bite her hand, and gave his plaintive growl. "Ah, ah,

ah, ah," he said again. Perry was cowering in the corner.

"I never saw such a bad-tempered cat," said Aunt Laura. "Poor Rascal, nice doggy," and she patted his head.

"A bad temper!" said Mrs. Marsh. "What kind of temper has the dog got?"

"He is a perfect darling, isn't he, children?" asked Aunt Laura.

"They are both darlings," said Tony. "Sandy is a darling, too."

"Well, we won't quarrel about it," said Mrs. Marsh, as she took the struggling Sandy out of the room. "We were a very peaceable family before Perry came. We'll try not to live like cats and dogs ourselves."

It was certain that Sandy was very unhappy after Perry Airedale came, for the dog soon ruled the house. He had his food in a blue-and-white china dish in the dining-room. Aunt Laura fed him when Tony was not at hand. He ought to have been satisfied. But one day he slipped into the kitchen and stole Sandy's food.

"You are a thief, Perry Airedale," Mrs. Marsh said.

"Indeed, he is not," Aunt Laura said. "It

isn't stealing to take what you find ready to your hand. It is no more stealing than for me to eat some of your apples that I find on the ground."

The next day Sandy got into the dining-room, and he ate some of Perry's meat that was in his blue dish.

"Oh, you little thief!" said Aunt Laura.

"It isn't stealing," said little Laura. "It is just like picking mother's apples up off the ground and eating them."

Aunt Laura laughed, and they all went out into the small garden behind the house, and got enough apples off the ground to have apple sauce for supper.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHEASANT COCK

THE next morning Tony waked up with a very bad cold. He hoped he could keep his secret, for it was Sunday morning, and everybody was going to Sunday School. His mother taught the class that he and Laura were in. And Aunt Laura played the organ. It would be very stupid to have to stay at home all alone. So he hoped nobody would find out that he had a cold until they got back from Sunday School and church. He tried a sentence to see how his voice sounded. "I haven't got a cold," he said aloud; and his voice sounded so hoarse that he decided he would not say a word, not even "Good-morning." His nose looked very red and his eyes watered, but he hoped nobody would notice it. He was the first one to sit down at the breakfast table.

Presently his mother came in with the coffee pot in her hand.

"Good-morning, Tony; you are down bright and early."

Tony said nothing. His mother had not looked at him. He breathed more freely. She went out and came back presently with some muffins. Tony began to eat his grapefruit. The sharpness of it seemed to hit a little place in his throat. He struggled not to cough. But it was of no use. His mother looked at him.

"Why, Tony," she said, "what a dreadful cold you have! I am so sorry."

"That's all right," said Tony; and his voice sounded so hoarse that his mother was more worried than ever.

Aunt Laura was the next to come in. Her place at table was just opposite his mother; and Tony was on her right. Nothing ever escaped Aunt Laura's brown eyes.

"Why, Tony, you have a dreadful cold," she said. "I was afraid he would take cold" — and she turned to her sister-in-law — "yesterday was such a cold day, and he stayed out so late."

Tony began to feel very cross. What business was it of hers, anyway? He was not *her* child. And then little Laura came down. She looked very gay and cheerful with her yellow hair tied with a Sunday ribbon. The grapefruit was so good that Tony risked taking another

spoonful, and this time he sneezed as well as coughed.

"Why, Tony, what an awful cold you have!" said little Laura.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tony.

"My dear little boy, how can you be so rude to your sister!" said his mother.

Tony was very much ashamed of himself. His mother so seldom scolded him; and she was right — he had been cross, and it wasn't Laura's fault that he had a cold. His mother decided that he was not to go to Sunday School. He was to stay in her sunny bedroom while they were gone; and there would be a fire on the hearth, and he could color some pictures with his paints; and she would come back as soon as Sunday School was over, and not stay to church. And with Perry Airedale for company the time would slip by so fast that he would not have time to feel lonely.

It was Aunt Laura who brought the wood in and made the fire. Aunt Laura was really very kind. It was she who thought of the house across the way.

"Some people have moved into the vacant house," she said. "Maybe you'll see somebody at the windows."

“Good-bye,” said little Laura, coming to Tony’s door a few minutes later. “I wish you could go, too.”

Laura looked so cheerful and was so sweet that Tony felt more ashamed of himself than ever.

“Laura,” said Tony; and then he gulped out the words with a rush, “Please excuse me.”

“For what?” said Laura, looking utterly bewildered.

“For being so cross,” said Tony.

“For being cross?” said Laura.

“For telling you to shut up.”

“Oh, that!” said Laura.

So she had entirely forgotten about it. Tony remembered how his mother once said everything went off Laura like water off a duck’s back.

“Good-bye,” said Laura, and she kissed her hand to Tony and slid down the banisters instead of walking down the stairs.

“Laura Marsh,” said her Aunt Laura, “have you no respect for your Sunday clothes?”

Tony was very busy with his painting for a time. It was most interesting. There were so many things to be decided. Should the cat in the picture be gray or brown? And would it be

better for the little girl to have a pink dress or a blue one? And should the house be red or yellow? But after a time he got tired of coloring pictures, so he got up off the bed and went over to join Perry Airedale who was sitting on a chair looking out of the window. Tony wanted to see what was going on in the house across the way. It was a gray stone house, a long way back from the road. All Tony could see was one side of the house. It was much larger than their own house. It stood in what seemed almost a grove of trees. On his side of Copley Lane there were three double houses, two besides theirs. Tony strained his eyes hoping that he could catch a glimpse of somebody coming along the lane. For they might turn and come down the lane instead of walking along the street on the other side.

Suddenly Tony saw a marvelous creature coming along the Lane. It was the most beautiful thing in feathers, for its size, that Tony had ever seen. It was as large as a cock, but far more beautiful and distinguished-looking. It did not have a red comb like the cock, nor did it walk with that air of pride. It came along sedately, and rather timidly. Tony got a glimpse of a bronze breast, and as it

turned into the avenue that led to the stone house he noticed what a long tail it had. But it was the head that was the most wonderful part, for it was blue-green, and there was a ring of white, like a necklace, around the neck. It seemed like a fairy bird going up to the palace where the Sleeping Beauty lived. Only it was not a palace. It was a house where real people lived; and, oh, joyful thought! there might be children living there.

When his mother came home, Tony said, the first thing, "Oh, mother, did you ever see a beautiful creature as big as a cock, only without a comb, and with a long tail and a blue-green head and a lovely, shiny breast?"

"Yes, I have," she said. "It must be a pheasant cock. There are a great many pheasants living in the Copley woods, at the end of the lane."

Tony thought that pheasant was a most interesting word. He kept saying over and over to himself, "It must be pleasant to be a pheasant, to be a pheasant cock."

Tony was not any better the next morning, and Laura had to start for school without him. They went to a private school for both boys and girls. It was a school where nobody who

had a cold was wanted. It was such a mild day that Mrs. Marsh let Tony sit out in the sun on the front porch, well wrapped up. The house faced the south, so it was a sunny place most of the day. He was sitting there when the boy who lived next door, in the other half of their house, came home from school.

"Hullo!" said the boy who lived next door. "What's the matter with you? You look rather rocky." The boy was much older than Tony, and he had a rough way with him. His name was Clarence Jones.

Tony said, "I'm all right, only they don't like children to come to our school with colds."

"Don't they?" said Clarence. "I guess you've got more than a cold," for Tony was beginning to cough very hard. "I'll bet anything you've got the whooping-cough. Sounds like it and there's lots of it around. I guess I won't stop and talk to you, for I've never had it."

The whooping-cough! Tony remembered how at the seashore he had played for a whole afternoon with a boy who afterwards came down with whooping-cough. But that was so long ago he had forgotten all about it. If he had whooping-cough, he couldn't go

to school for weeks and weeks. He couldn't play with Laura. How dreadful that would be! He wondered if dogs and cats ever had whooping-cough. It wouldn't be so bad if he could play with Perry and Sandy. But Clarence might have been only teasing him.

His mother sent for the doctor that very afternoon. Tony liked the doctor, he was so kind and so amusing. But he did not like being fussed over.

"I guess I haven't got the whooping-cough," said Tony.

"I'm pretty sure you have, young man. You'd better keep him away from the little girl. And Miss Marsh says she has never had it. It goes hard with grown people."

"We can get on very well," said Mrs. Marsh. "Tony and I will have a nice time together."

It was not such a very nice time for Tony, for the first two weeks, but there were nice things about it, for his mother read aloud to him a great deal. It was when Tony was getting better and well enough to play out of doors on mild days that he made the personal acquaintance of the pheasant cock. He had grown very much interested in the house across the way. There was no one to be seen there through the

day. But at night the lower story was brightly lighted. When Tony went to bed there was always a light in one of the rooms in the second story, so Tony was sure that a child was being put to bed. Once or twice, when he waked up late, and had a fit of coughing, some of the other windows were brightly lighted. He took to walking with Perry Airedale along the street on which the house faced, hoping that some day somebody would come out of the green front door with the brass knocker. One afternoon he saw two ladies going in. They were fashionably dressed, and they looked about the age of his mother. He was disappointed to find they were merely callers, for they rang the bell and took cards out of their card-cases when the maid came to the door. Once, late in the afternoon, he saw a tall, energetic-looking man walk with a long stride up the brick walk and let himself in with a latch-key. That must be the father, he decided.

It was three o'clock the next afternoon, when Tony once more saw the pheasant cock. This time he was not alone. There were three rather dowdy and uninteresting-looking creatures with him. He was sure they were pheasant hens. They were all walking soberly along

the lane. Tony watched them with the keenest interest. Yes, they were all turning in at the back road which led to the house across the way. Why were they going there? He would follow them and see. He went very slowly, a long way behind them, so as not to startle them. Suddenly he heard some one push up a window. He could not see the window, but he could see two arms stretched out and a shower of bits of bread fell to the ground. One arm was big and the hand was large and red. The other hand was as small as his, and the arm was in a blue sleeve. So a child really did live there. He wondered whether it was a boy or a girl.

The next afternoon, at three o'clock, Tony was once more at the foot of the road, for if the pheasants came once for food they would come again. This time the cock was alone. He was on the avenue in front of Tony. Tony ran forward so as to get a better view of that bronze breast and bluish-green head with a white necklace around it. Suddenly, hearing Tony's footsteps, the pheasant cock spread his wings, ran along the ground a little way, and flew up into a tree. Tony stood looking up into the tree with astonishment.

"I didn't know he could fly," said Tony.

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE ACROSS THE WAY

It was the next Sunday, while the family were at Sunday School, that Tony had his great adventure. Nobody else would have thought it a great adventure, for it was only meeting two children. But to Tony it seemed so. For when a little boy has been shut away from everybody for some weeks, small adventures seem great. Tony and Perry Airedale were walking along in the Lane that Sunday morning. He was not thinking about the people who lived in the house across the way, he was not thinking of the pheasants — he was thinking how, in a few days, he would be back at school again, and how good that would be. He had given up expecting anybody in the stone house to come into the lane. He heard footsteps. He was almost at the end of the lane, and was turning to go down the other street. Going around the square made a nice walk. As he turned, he saw two children coming down the back avenue of the stone house. Presently

they turned into the lane. Tony stood stock-still watching them.

He saw at once that the boy was about his own age. The girl was much older. She looked almost like a little mother. She must be as old as fourteen. She had brown hair and blue eyes and a nice color, and she had the little boy by the hand. Tony looked at the little boy, and the little boy looked at him. Tony felt shy and uncomfortable. But the little boy did not seem shy. He let go his sister's hand and ran up to Tony.

"Have you had the whooping-cough?" was his unexpected question.

"I'm having it," said Tony.

"Oh, goody!" said the little boy. "I'm having it, too. I can't go to school, and I can't play with the kids who haven't had it."

"Neither can I," said Tony.

The small boy looked at Tony, and Tony looked at the small boy.

"What's your name?" asked the small boy.

"Anthony Marsh. Everybody calls me Tony."

"My name is Asa Lane. Isn't it funny our name should be Lane and we should live on a lane?"

It did not strike Tony as so very funny, but

he laughed just because Asa laughed. And it was so good to laugh, for it was so long since he had, that he laughed and laughed.

"What is the joke?" the girl asked, coming up.

They both sobered down, for really there was nothing to laugh at. The truth was they had both been lonely, and it was good to find a comrade in misfortune.

"We've both got whooping-cough," Asa explained, and he laughed again.

"That is funny," said the girl, and she laughed too. "Now you'll have some one to play with besides me."

"You are all right," the boy said loyally, "but you are a girl, and you are big."

"I am Harriet, Asa's sister," the girl explained. "I've got whooping-cough, too, but I'm nearly over it. I gave it to Asa."

"I can't give it to Laura," Tony explained, "because they won't let us be together. Laura said she'd like to have it, so she wouldn't have to go to school."

Tony had never said so much in his life to strangers, but somehow they seemed like old friends. Companionship in the misfortune of having whooping-cough is a great bond.

"Would your mother let you come and play with me?" Tony asked.

"We haven't any mother," the boy said.

A shade came over his face and across the girl's. Tony was sorry he had asked the question.

"I'm sure Aunt Hattie will let him come. Aunt Hattie is as good as a mother."

"I haven't got any father," Tony said. "I've got a mother, and an aunt. I'm the only man in the family. Father was killed in the war in France. He was very brave. His name was the same as mine, Anthony Marsh, and he was first lieutenant."

The two little boys looked at each other. Tony was sorry for Asa. It must be terrible not to have a mother. How could an Aunt Hattie be as good as a mother? He would not have Aunt Laura instead of a mother on any account.

And Asa was sorry for Tony. It must be hard not to have a father. And then they forgot the next minute to be sorry for each other, for Perry came back from a foraging excursion and leaped up on Tony in his joy at seeing him.

"We haven't got any dog," said Asa.

The next day it rained. It was a pelting,

pouring rain. The drops chased one another down the window-pane. It must be a sociable thing to be a raindrop, Tony thought, for they could all play together. Sandy wanted to go out in spite of the rain, so Tony let him out. Lucky Sandy! Tony made up a little verse:

It must be handy to be like Sandy,
Then I could leave the house.
It isn't pleasing to still be sneezing;
I'd rather catch a mouse.

To be sure, Sandy wanted to come in again very soon, and he looked like a drowned rat. He looked the way Tony's mother had looked when the spray had come over her. Laura went off to school in spite of the rain. Lucky Laura! She had on her raincoat and her rubber boots, and she kissed her hand to him as she ran along the lane. Then Aunt Laura went out. She had to go to Boston to give some music lessons, and to take a singing lesson. It was the day in the week that she did not come back until night. She had her umbrella open, but the wind blew so hard that she presently closed it. Lucky Aunt Laura, to be going out into the storm!

"This is one of the days, Tony, when it is a comfort to have a roof over our heads," said

his mother. "I am so glad you and I do not have to go out."

So that was the way she felt! Even his sensible mother! How terrible it must be to be grown up! How simply awful! It would be better in some ways to be a cat, for cats had adventures. Sandy, who was now dried and warm, was already at the door again, loudly pleading to be let out. As Tony opened the door for him, he saw, to his great surprise, that Harriet was walking along the lane. She was coming nearer and nearer. Could it be possible that she was coming to their house? It was possible. She was turning into their path. In another minute she had run up the steps and was coming in at the door that Tony was still holding open.

"Good-morning, Tony," said Harriet. "Bad morning, I should say," and she shook her raincoat. "I'm dripping wet. I'm too wet to come in. I have a message for your mother from Aunt Hattie."

Tony dashed off to find his mother; and presently she came back with him.

"I'm Harriet Lane," said the girl. "I live in the house across the way. My aunt, Miss Harriet Lane, said she would have come to see

you herself, only it is such an awful day."

"Yes," said Mrs. Marsh, "I was just saying to Tony it is one of those days when we are lucky to have a roof over our heads."

"Aunt Hattie wanted to know if Tony could come over this morning to play with Asa. Asa's cough is still so bad he can't go out. She thought maybe Tony was so nearly well he could come over and play with Asa. We can lend him shoes and stockings if he gets wet coming across the way, and perhaps he will bring his dog with him."

"Tony always has his lessons with me in the morning," said his mother.

"Oh, mother!" Tony turned beseeching eyes on her.

Mrs. Marsh looked at the eager little face turned up to hers. "It is a dreadful day for a little boy to go out who is just getting over whooping-cough," she said.

"Oh, mother, but it is such a dreadful day to stay in."

"Truly, I'll change his things the minute he gets into our house, and it is just as warm as yours is. And we were going to play the Magazine game, and it is so much more exciting with three."

"Oh, mother!" Tony begged again. He hadn't the least idea what the Magazine game was, but it sounded interesting.

"Couldn't he have his lessons in the afternoon?" Harriet pleaded.

Mrs. Marsh hesitated again. It was a dreadful storm, but it was a very short distance to go. Of course he could have the lessons in the afternoon. Then a bright idea struck her. "Where does your brother go to school when he is well enough to go anywhere?" she asked.

"To the Sanger School."

"That's my school," said Tony, greatly excited.

"Perhaps to-morrow, if it doesn't rain, Asa would like to come over here and have lessons with Tony. It is almost as much fun to have lessons together as to play together."

Tony and Harriet ran across the Lane and up the back driveway that led to Harriet's house, with Perry Airedale at their heels. They ran as fast as they could run. But in spite of this, the water streamed off their raincoats when they reached the house. They went in at the kitchen door, as it was the nearer way. Here they took off their raincoats and rubbers. Tony was dry underneath. A pleas-

ant-looking woman was taking something with a spicy smell out of the oven.

"This is Sarah," said Harriet. "I don't know what we should do without Sarah. She cooks such delicious things for us. Sarah, this is Tony, the little boy who lives across the way."

Tony saw by her hands that it must have been Sarah who fed the pheasants the other afternoon. "You feed the pheasants, don't you?" he asked.

"I feed every living thing that comes around," she said. "I'll feed you. I'll give you and Miss Harriet, each, one of these cinnamon buns, and here's one for Asa."

Tony thought everything about the kitchen delightful, from the big windows and the old-fashioned range, with bricks around it, to Sarah herself, looking so cozy and comfortable and as if she just loved to feed everything in sight, from pheasants to little boys. It seemed to him that he had never tasted anything so good as that cinnamon bun. They made their way through the entry into the front part of the house, and went into a room where there was a fire on the hearth and a table on which were piles of books and magazines. Here a lady

was sitting with a work-basket piled high with stockings. She was darning one of them, a small one, just Asa's size. Asa himself was curled up on the window-seat with some magazines.

"I thought you'd never come," he said.

The lady got up and came forward to greet Tony. He thought he had never seen any one who looked more kind and dear. She was much older than his mother. She might almost be a grandmother.

"How very nice that you could come over to-day," she said.

The children seated themselves at the table, and Harriet gave each of the boys a pile of magazines, and kept an equal number for herself.

"I am your mother," she explained to them. "My husband has gone to California for his health, and I have to have the new house we are moving into all ready for him when he comes back. Aunt Hattie is my husband, but she is still in California. We can only have the kind of food that is advertised in the back of the magazines, and our house can only be furnished with the kind of furniture we find. But first we have to get the house. The first one who finds a house must call out 'House.'

And every time any one finds anything I'll put a mark against his name. When the game is done, the one who has the most marks has a prize. It isn't much of a prize, but it is always different. That's what makes it so exciting. Aunt Hattie comes back from California and gives out the prize at the end. First, we must find a house."

She showed Tony where to find the advertisements at the back of the magazines so that he could have a fair start, and presently she said, "One, two, three! Now, we'll all go house-hunting."

At first Tony thought there were no houses in any of his magazines, but presently, to his delight, he found an attractive one. It was a beautiful house with roses growing over it, and a garden. "House," said Tony and Asa at the same moment. Each was sure he had found his first, and each preferred his own house.

"Mine is lots prettier," said Tony.

"Mine is much the best," Asa insisted. "It is a portable house. We can take it anywhere we like."

"It is a very ugly house," said Tony. "Mine is beautiful. It says so."

"Mine is much handier," said Asa.

"Oh, come, children," said Harriet, "we shall never be ready for your father when he comes back from California if we quarrel like this. I'll give you each a mark, and we'll take the beautiful house for a year, and we'll buy the portable house, so we'll have something to live in if all else fails. Now we must find furniture for the beautiful house."

"I've found an automobile!" Tony said, with excitement.

"An automobile isn't furniture," Asa protested. "That isn't fair."

Tony looked inquiringly at Harriet.

"Let your brother have his automobile," she decided judicially. "When he has learned to drive it he will take you out in it."

"You can't keep an automobile in the house. You said furniture," Asa protested.

"We can turn the portable house into a garage," said Harriet.

"Here's a piano," said Asa.

"That's good. It doesn't matter if we have to sleep on the floor the first night, if we can only have music."

"I've found a dining-table," Asa cried.

"Oh," said Tony, "what a wonderful thing!" as he picked up the advertising sheet

of a furniture store. "It isn't fair for me to count them all. There are beds and chairs and tables and a sideboard."

It was not long before their imaginary house was completely furnished, and then the hunt for food began. The bill of fare was somewhat limited. They had chocolate and Quaker Oats and a turkey. This Harriet found. After the larder was well stocked, they hunted through the catalogues and advertisements for suitable clothes.

"Here are stockings," Tony cried in triumph. "Holeless stockings."

"I should like to put my family into that kind," Aunt Hattie said, looking up from her mending.

Tony and Asa came out exactly even. Harriet was far behind. But Aunt Hattie decided to give them each a prize. She went into the kitchen, and presently a maid, not Sarah, but a younger one, brought in three tumblers of milk and three cinnamon buns.

It was not to be a long farewell when they parted.

"Mother gives me lessons from ten to twelve," said Tony.

"You bet I'll be there," said Asa.

CHAPTER VI

LEARNING TO SKATE

THIS autumn, when Tony got over the whooping-cough, it was so exciting just to be well and to play with other children again and to go to school, that it made it good to be alive. There was a meadow belonging to the Copleys at the end of the lane that was already coated over with ice. It was a safe place for little children to learn to skate. Mrs. Copley was a friend of the Lanes, and so Harriet and Asa were allowed to skate there. She came to call on Mrs. Marsh and asked her to let Laura and Tony come there whenever they liked. Harriet said she would teach them to skate.

Aunt Laura gave little Laura a pair of skates, and there was an old pair in the attic that had belonged to Tony's father when he was a little boy. Mrs. Marsh brought them down for Tony. They were old-fashioned, but Tony did not mind that. He felt very proud to wear them. They were trying to skate in the meadow when the boy who lived next door

came along. He stood watching them, looking over the fence.

"Gee," he said to Tony, "where did you get those skates?"

"They belonged to my father," said Tony.

"Aren't they any older than that?" said Clarence. "I thought they looked as if Noah had worn them when he came out of the ark."

"They'd have been too small for him," Tony retorted.

Clarence stood there for some time, making jeering remarks about their skating. Harriet looked annoyed. Tony's face grew redder and redder. Finally little Laura spoke.

"If you don't like the way we skate, why don't you go away?" she asked. "I think you are a perfect pig!"

The big boy looked down at the small girl with amusement.

"You needn't laugh," said little Laura. "I think you are the horriest boy I have ever seen. I'd rather skate with Tony with his old skates than with any one with new ones. So there! Now you can go away."

"But suppose I don't choose to go?"

Just then the father of Harriet and Asa came out of his front door. He had been

watching them from the window. Clarence slunk away when he saw Mr. Lane coming.

Tony made up his mind that he would spend his Christmas money that year for a new pair of skates. It was not that he was too proud to wear his father's skates, but it is not pleasant to be the subject of so many remarks. He could learn to skate all right on the old skates, but he looked at his sister's skates with admiration.

Laura learned to skate first. She was very quick at such things, and, besides, she had the new pair of skates. Tony was quicker than Laura at his lessons. He could learn poetry while Laura was getting ready to learn it. Their mother was bringing them up in the old-fashioned way, in which she had been brought up, and on Sunday afternoon she had them learn a part of a Psalm or a hymn. Tony learned "The Lord is my shepherd" with great ease; and Laura was always making mistakes in it. She used to say, "Thou settest a table for me," and when her mother corrected her she said, "I like my way best. 'Thou preparest a table for me' sounds so old-fashioned. I like 'settest a table.'"

But when it came to learning to skate there

was no comparison between them. Laura learned so quickly. Tony kept falling down and sprawling on the ice. He would pick himself up and go at it again. If Tony once made up his mind to learn a thing he learned it.

"My dear little boy," his mother said one night, "what an awful bruise you've got on your head. Did you tumble down in skating?"

"Yes, mother."

"He fell down three times to-day," said Laura.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tony. He had never meant to say this to Laura again, but the words slipped out before he knew it. Laura could be aggravating.

"He's very brave, mother," said Laura, regretting her words, and trying to make up for them. "He's as brave as Robert Bruce and the spider. He just keeps on trying and trying again."

"Oh, do keep quiet, Laura!" said Tony. She was getting worse and worse.

"I think it would be a very good plan, Tony, dear," said his mother, "if you stayed at home for an afternoon or two until you are a little less stiff. I am sure you will learn all the quicker for a rest."

"Mother, I can't stop," said Tony. "I'm going to keep on every single afternoon all my life. I'll keep on till I'm fifty, if I have to, but I'll learn to skate."

Asa learned before Tony did. He had a trying way of circling around Tony and saying, "Watch the way I do it. It's so easy."

One day the tears came into Tony's eyes. He felt so stupid and awkward. He was perfectly miserable. He knew that he should feel perfectly miserable day in and day out until he had learned to skate. One afternoon, as he was sitting at the window of his small front room, a snowball hit it and looking out he saw Harriet. She had her skates with her. He pushed up the window.

"I've come to kidnap you," said Harriet. "Your mother came over with a knitting rule for Aunt Hattie, and I asked her if I might kidnap you, and she said I might. You are to steal out of the house without letting your Aunt Laura or Laura know where you are going, and you are to come skating with me over at Brown's Pond. It's frozen over and perfectly safe, father says."

"Is Asa coming, too?" Tony asked.

"Asa?" in fine scorn. "I don't take him along when I kidnap anybody."

"Are we going just by our two selves?"

"Just by our two selves. I know I can teach you to skate in a jiffy if we are alone."

Aunt Laura was giving little Laura a music lesson. Fortunately the parlor folding doors were shut so as to keep out Perry and Sandy.

"You'd better go out the back way so they can't see you," said Harriet.

"Can Perry come with us?"

"Not to-day. If one kidnaps a person a dog might bark and spoil everything."

"Harriet Lane is coming in," said little Laura. "Please, Aunt Laura, let me stop and speak to her."

"Sit still on the music-stool where you are," Aunt Laura commanded. "She isn't coming in. She is just talking to Tony at the window."

Tony slid down the banisters of the back stairs. This was less noisy than walking down. Then he took off his shoes and stole into the hall closet where his coat and hat and skates were kept. Perry Airedale, alas, was lying on the rug in front of the parlor door. He was waiting patiently until the door should be opened. When he saw Tony he made a spring and put his paws on his shoulders. Tony went softly along the entry with Perry following at

his heels. He got a cracker out of the cracker jar on the sideboard and dropped it into Perry's mouth.

"Keep quiet, there's a good fellow. Don't betray me," he whispered. He closed the dining-room door after he had seen that Perry was in the hall. In the kitchen he met the cat.

"Wroof, wroof," said Sandy, in his pleasant way, and he began to scratch Tony's legs.

"Oh, come, now," said Tony.

"Wroof, wroof," said Sandy again.

"Well, if you must."

Sandy was a privileged character. He could go when he pleased and where he pleased. Tony let him out of the kitchen. He and Harriet went up the back road to her house, so as to go around to the other street. Sandy followed them.

"Goodness," said Tony, looking back. "If there isn't Sandy! We can't take him to the pond."

Harriet stooped and picked up the protesting Sandy. She loved pussy-cats, and they knew it. She held Sandy up with his head looking back at Tony over her shoulder.

"I'll leave him in our kitchen, and he can go

home with your mother. Wait for me. I'll tell your mother you are really kidnaped."

While he was waiting, Sarah came to the door and gave him two ginger cookies fresh from the oven. They were big ones, with something besides ginger inside. The little boy had never felt happier as he trotted along with Harriet. He loved Harriet. She had such kind blue eyes. She was fifteen now, and grown-up enough for one to go with her anywhere.

"Our mittens are just the same color," said Tony, looking down with interest at his small one as Harriet held out her large hand to him.

"Yes, they are made out of the same yarn. Aunt Hattie gave some she had left to your mother."

"Let's pretend that your mittens are the father and mother and my mittens are the two children," said Tony.

"No, that won't do," said Harriet gravely. "You see I am kidnaping you and your mittens. I and my mittens have no children of our own, so we have to kidnap you and your mittens."

Tony laughed in delight.

When they came to the pond he gave a little squeal of pleasure — it was so beautiful — the

dark pine trees with glistening ice on their branches, and the sheet of ice, with the blue sky overhead. The skaters flitting by in their bright colors made part of the picture. Tony liked having Harriet all to himself. Before the afternoon was over, he had begun to skate a little, taking hold of her hand. Suddenly he let go. It was an exciting moment. He did not tumble down. He skated a few steps alone.

"Harriet," he cried, "look at me! I am skating alone!"

"Yes," said Harriet. "You have learned. All you need now is practice. We'll keep it a secret from Asa and Laura, and we won't let them know I kidnaped you. Think what fun it will be, the next time we go skating, for you to surprise them by skating off all by yourself."

And it was fun. It happened the very next afternoon, before the big snowstorm that put an end to all skating for a time.

Harriet came over and said demurely, "Do you children want to go skating with Asa and me at Brown's Pond? Father says it's safe there."

"At Brown's Pond?" Laura cried. "What fun! Tony and I have never been there."

Once more Tony was delighted with the

sparkling ice on the dark green of the fir trees, and the shining ice underfoot and the blue sky. It was a grayer blue to-day, and there were clouds gathering for the predicted storm. Some wild ducks flew by overhead.

"Now, Tony, I'll take your hand," said Laura. "Hold on to me. Don't be afraid."

"I don't need anybody's hand," said Tony. "I'd rather skate by myself."

Tony began to skate by himself. He was very cool about it. He skated as if he had never had a fall.

"Goodness!" said Laura. "Why, Tony Marsh!"

Laura shaded her eyes with her mittened hand, as if she thought she wasn't seeing straight. "Goodness!" she exclaimed again.

"Want a hand, Laura?" Tony asked.

"For mercy's sake!" said Laura. She was using all the exclamations of surprise that she knew.

Clarence, the boy who lived next door, skated past them.

"Hullo, Noah," he called out. He made Tony a low bow.

Tony did not care what the boy called him, or what he thought of his skates. They were

good skates all right. They were tried and trusty friends. And what of Harriet? If his father's skates were tried and trusty friends, what was she? Harriet was a tried and trusty friend, for she had taught him to skate. He had a fondness for the old skates his father had worn when he was a little boy. And yet — he looked at his sister Laura's shining new ones, and he made up his mind that, when his Christmas money came from his grandmother, he would buy a pair of new skates just like Laura's.

CHAPTER VII

THE INVISIBLE GUEST

THAT was the winter that everybody was working for the starving little children abroad. Mrs. Marsh told Tony and Laura how a Mr. Hoover was asking for money so they could be fed. The twins listened wide-eyed while their mother told them about the forlorn little children across the sea.

They seemed a long way off to Laura. "I'm glad we have plenty to eat and a nice warm fire," she said; and she gave Geraldine, the doll her aunt had given her at Christmas, a hug.

Tony, however, could not get the starving children out of his mind.

"Are they very hungry, mother?" he asked.

"I am afraid they are. But Mr. Hoover spends the money he gets for food."

"What sort of food?" Laura asked.

"Cocoa and stew and bread."

"I should think he might get something nicer for them than stew," said Laura.

"I bet you'd think stew was pretty good if you were starving," Tony said.

Just then their neighbor, Mrs. Copley, came in. She was a stout, prosperous-looking woman, who always wore expensive clothes, but never looked so nice as their mother, the children thought.

"I have come to ask you to go to the Hoover dinner with us at Symphony Hall to-morrow night," she said. "It is to be a grand affair. Mr. Hoover is to speak. All the society people will be there, and will pay enormous prices for their seats. The dinner is to be just what the starving children abroad have — stew, bread, and cocoa. All the money that is made will go over to get food for the poor little children."

"Thank you for asking me," said Mrs. Marsh; "I should enjoy it, I am sure; but I know Miss Marsh would like it even more. And she has the right clothes to wear."

"You are a soldier's widow, my dear. Your simple mourning dress would be in keeping with the occasion. You really ought not to miss it. There is to be a little high-chair on the platform, and a small table and a lighted candle, to represent the Invisible Guest."

"Who is the Invisible Guest?" little Laura asked.

"The hungry little child."

"If you don't mind taking my sister Laura instead of me —" Mrs. Marsh began. "Of course, you may have some other plan."

"I shall be delighted to take dear Miss Marsh. I only wish there were room at the table for both of you. Our nephew, Copley Miles, is to dine with us. The young people always enjoy each other. Tell Miss Laura to put on her prettiest evening gown, and to come over for an early dinner with us at half-past six. For, really, you know, stew and cocoa and bread is all very effective and picturesque, but the men of the party would never stand for it, and nothing else. I am collecting money for the cause. I hope you may feel like giving me a little something. Children, perhaps you would like to give me a part of your Christmas money. Every little helps."

"I'm going to get some skates with my Christmas money," Tony said firmly. He did not like Mrs. Copley. What business of hers was it how he spent his Christmas money?

"Don't you think that is a little selfish?" Mrs. Copley asked. "Couldn't you spare part of it for me?"

"If I gave you any, I wouldn't have enough for the skates," said Tony.

"And how about you?" she said, turning to the small Laura.

"I've spent mine already, except a little bit I've saved to get a sweater for my best doll."

"I promised Miss Lane that I would give her the little I can afford to give," said Mrs. Marsh.

The prosperous-looking lady fastened up her fur coat, her bead necklace flashing as she did so.

"Well, I must be going. Tell dear Miss Marsh we dine promptly at half-past six."

After she had gone Mrs. Marsh said, "It was very kind of Mrs. Copley to ask one of us to the dinner. I am sure your Aunt Laura will enjoy it greatly."

The children were silent.

"I am sorry you were both of you so, so" — she paused, for the right word: rude was too strong — "so outspoken. It isn't necessary to tell everybody all one plans to do. I think we all ought to give up a little something, we have so much. I am going to wear my old suit for a third winter," and she glanced down at her black serge. "It seems as if Geraldine might go without her sweater."

"But you are a soldier's widow," said Laura.

"You look nice in your black things. Geraldine is young. She is just crazy for a pink sweater with a white border — the kind they had at the Fair."

"I see. I was only thinking that you children have so much — a good home, a warm fire, good food; even the animals have enough. I thought perhaps you could spare just a little bit — say fifty cents for Miss Hattie Lane, for the children abroad who are hungry and cold."

"I'll give her all my Christmas money," Tony burst out.

"All of it? I don't expect you to give all of it," said his mother.

"I'll give her all of it," said Tony. "It won't go very far. I can skate with my old skates. I won't give a cent to Mrs. Copley, but I'll give all I have to Miss Hattie Lane."

"Well, I won't," said Laura. "I've got so little left it wouldn't do any good to a starving child. I think I have a right to look out for my own child first," and she gave her doll a hug.

The night of the dinner Aunt Laura came down dressed in the gown that little Laura liked so much. It had jet spangles all over it. The little girl fingered them gently. She thought what a pretty neck and arms her aunt

had. Why did not everybody wear low-necked and short-sleeved dresses every evening?

"I am so sorry you are not going, Katharine," Aunt Laura said to Mrs. Marsh. "If I had been here I should have insisted on your going instead of me. Tony, help me on with my wrap. You are the man of the family."

"We are going to have our own celebration," said Mrs. Marsh. "There is no family so poor in all this comfortable and blessed land that they cannot have a supper for the Invisible Guest."

When Aunt Laura had finally gone, Mrs. Marsh opened the dining-room door, and the children were delighted with what they saw. At the head of the table was the high-chair Tony had sat in when he was a tiny boy. This was the place for the Invisible Guest. A candle was burning near it. Next Laura's place at the table was her own old high-chair, and in it sat Geraldine.

"Now we'll pretend that there is a hungry little child sitting at the head of the table," their mother said, as she filled the plate of the Invisible Guest with stew.

"A girl or a boy?" asked Laura.

Mrs. Marsh hesitated for a minute.

"A girl," she said. "A little hungry girl who hasn't any playthings. She hasn't a doll. All she can do is to make-believe she has one. She is so hungry," she added, as she filled the cup for the Invisible Guest with cocoa, "that when she sees this bread and cocoa and stew her eyes shine."

"What color are her eyes?" Laura asked.

"Brown. Just about the color of yours. She isn't a bit like you in anything else, for she is very thin."

"How old is she?" Tony asked.

"She will be seven in a few days. Her birthday is in February."

"Just our age," said Laura.

The children ate their own stew and bread and drank their cocoa while they chattered about the Invisible Guest. They named her Isabella Gardi, for the initials were the same as those of the Invisible Guest, and they thought it had a foreign sound. Finally the last of their own food was gone, and they divided the portion for Isabella, Laura drinking her cocoa and leaving most of the stew for Tony. "For I am not so fond of stew as you are," she said. Geraldine's portion also disappeared.

"I think it was so nice of you to let Geraldine come to the table," said Laura.

"I thought it might be a good lesson for her, too," said Mrs. Marsh.

"It has been," said Laura. "She has decided to give up having a sweater."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADVENTURE

It was a real adventure this time. Tony was always having adventures, for he could hardly step out of the house without something happening. Just meeting the pheasant cock in the lane was an adventure to him. He had become quite friendly with the pheasants. He had found out a great deal about them. He had learned that they walked along the lane, but that they always took wing and flew across the road, where the automobiles were constantly passing. But Laura seldom had adventures. There was no excitement to her in meeting the pheasant cock. She could not see why Tony said so much about it. This time, however, Laura had a real adventure.

She had a severe cold and a temperature, and she was in bed for three days. When Tony had to stay in bed, he could amuse himself, but Laura always wanted some one to sit in the room with her every single minute. She would beg her mother to read to her, and she would interrupt to say how badly her head ached.

"I must go down and look at my bread now," said her mother. "If your head is aching so badly, it will be better for you to have a rest."

"No, mother, do come right, straight back. My head doesn't ache so much when you are here."

Everybody was glad when Laura's cold was better, including Laura herself. She was now well enough to play around the house, and she had been out in the sun that day at noon. When Harriet and Asa came for Tony to go skating with them, Laura begged to be allowed to go, too.

"Not to-day, dear," said her mother. "There is a cold wind, and it gets dark so early. I am so sorry I have to leave you to go to the sewing-circle. But they are depending on me to cut out the work. Aunt Laura will be in, though, until I get back. I shall be back by a little after five. I won't wait for tea."

"Yes, I expect to be in all the afternoon," said Aunt Laura.

Aunt Laura never paid as much attention to little Laura as her mother did. She thought children had better amuse themselves. So she told Laura she could bring her knitting into

the parlor where she was practicing, or play with Geraldine there, if she would be quiet. Laura liked music, but she got bored hearing her aunt play the same thing over and over again. So when the doorbell rang, she slipped down from her chair and ran to the door. It was the horrid caller, Mr. Miles, the one who was always forgetting how old she and Tony were. He had a horse and sleigh outside, just as if it were old times, and they were living in the country.

"How do you do, little girl?" said Mr. Miles. "Is your aunt in? But I know she is, for I have heard her."

"I haven't been a bit well," said Laura. "I had grippe. My temperature was up at a hundred and three, and I had to stay in bed three days."

Mr. Miles made no reply. He did not seem to think this at all important. But why had he asked how she was, if he had not wanted to know? Mr. Perry would have said, "You poor child!" and he would have given her something. Perhaps a piece of candy. Mr. Miles pushed rudely past her, and went into the parlor.

"Well, Miss Marsh, that was a great affair,

the other night," he said. "Really, Hoover was great. You see I took you at your word when you said you liked a sleigh-ride, and I have come around for you this afternoon."

"Oh, but I can't go this afternoon," said Miss Marsh. "It is too bad. But Mrs. Marsh is out, and I must stay and look after Laura."

"That is a nuisance," he said. And then a bright idea occurred to him. "Can't you get somebody to come in and look after her — a neighbor, for instance?"

"I couldn't ask it of anybody."

"Oh, but you must come. The sun is so bright, and the snow is just right for a sleigh-ride. And I had such a time finding a horse and sleigh. They seem to be obsolete. I didn't telephone to you, for I wasn't sure I could get off until the last minute. And I knew this was an afternoon that I should be sure to find you."

"Perhaps I could get Mrs. O'Brien's girl to come for the afternoon," said Aunt Laura. "They have a telephone. I'll call up and see."

She found that Annie O'Brien was glad to come, and as she would be there in half an hour, there did not seem to be any reason for waiting any longer.

Little Laura watched her aunt get into the

sleigh with Mr. Miles and drive away. Aunt Laura ought not to have gone off and left her. Aunt Laura always stayed at home Thursday afternoons and did her practicing, and saw callers when they came. Everybody was having a good time, and they had all forgotten about her. Tony ought not to have gone skating; he ought to have stayed at home and played with her. And her mother — well, she supposed her mother did have to go and cut out clothes. She took up Geraldine and put her by the window so she could look out, too. But there was nothing to see — only the pheasant cock and a few dowdy-looking hens crossing to go up to the Lanes' avenue for their afternoon meal. It would be half an hour before Annie O'Brien came, and Annie was no good. When she had said to Annie, "I want you to meet my child, Geraldine," she had said, "She isn't a child, she's a doll." She supposed they were all skating in the Copley meadow, just at the end of the Lane. The sun was very bright. She knew she should not take cold. If her mother had known the sun was to come out and be so very bright, perhaps she would have let her go skating. She could come back in a few minutes so as to be there when

Annie came. Surely, her mother could not mind her going out in the bright sun, just to the Copley meadow. Anyway, whether her mother minded or not, she was going out. Her mother did not know how much she needed the fresh air, and how wretched it made her to stay in the house all alone.

So she put on her outside things, and she took her skates and went out of the house. When Laura reached the Copley meadow, the children were nowhere to be seen. Nobody was skating there at all.

“They must have gone to Brown’s Pond,” thought Laura.

Laura had only been once to Brown’s Pond, and Harriet had gone with them. But Laura was sure she knew the way, and now she was once out, she could not bear to go back without finding the other children. How surprised they would be to see her when they thought she was at home in the house! She would find them at Brown’s Pond. It would be just a nice walk, and they would all come home with her, and then they could play the Magazine game. It was very cold. They would be glad to come into the warm house. She took the first turn to the left; she was sure that was the right

turn, and presently she found herself in a region where there were small houses crowded together. She did not remember seeing these houses before. A dog came out of one of them and barked at her. He did not look very clean, and he did not seem to like her at all. Laura was frightened. She turned and ran back as fast as she could the way she had come. When she got back to the main road, it did not look the same. She got all mixed up about the way. Everything looked more and more strange.

"I guess I've got an adventure this time. I guess I'm lost," she said.

Somehow it did not seem so nice to have an adventure now she was having it. She thought of the warm room at home, with Geraldine sitting at the window. Annie O'Brien must be there now. What would Annie think when she did not find any little girl there? Annie was very kind, even if she did not understand about playing dolls. Of course, she could ask somebody the way to Brown's Pond, or she could ask how to get home to Copley Lane. She did not like the looks of the few people who were in the street. She could stop at a house, but she did not like the looks of the houses. Everything looked so white, with the snow on the

ground, and so cold. Oh, why had she not stayed at home! The sharp wind set her to coughing, and her hands and feet felt numb. She did not want to find the way to Brown's Pond. She wanted to find the way back to her warm, comfortable house. A rough-looking man was coming along — that is, his clothes were poor, but he had a good face.

"Can you tell me how to get to Copley Lane?" she asked.

"Never heard of it."

He seemed in a great hurry, and he went quickly past her. The next person who came along was a poorly clad woman with a bottle of milk in her hand.

"Where is Copley Lane?" Laura asked.

"Copley Lane?" The woman paused to think. "I don't know. What street is it near?"

"It is near South Street."

"South Street? You are going in just the wrong direction. It is quite a ways. You are pretty small to be out alone."

Laura walked back the way the woman told her to go, and after a time things began to look more natural. But it was very queer. It looked the way it did near the shop where her mother had once gone with them when they

had taken their shoes to be mended. That was a long way from home. But the man who mended shoes was a kind man, and he had a brown tiger-cat, and he would let her get warm and tell her how to get home. She went up the steps to the shop. The tiger-cat was waiting by the door to get in. Laura was almost crying as she opened the door of the shop.

"Bless my heart," said the old man. "If it isn't little Miss Marsh! What do you want? Do your shoes need mending again?"

"I've got lost," said Laura. "And I am very cold. I've been sick. I've had a temperature of a hundred and three. But I'm all well now, only mother told me to stay in. The others went skating, and I tried to find them, and I got lost."

"Bless my soul," said the old man again. "Nelly," he called to his wife, "here's a lost child. I expect she's hungry, too."

A pleasant-looking woman came down and took Laura up to the rooms over the shop. And she gave her some bread and milk. Laura thought of the hungry little child — the one they had called Isabella Gardi — while she was eating the bread and drinking the milk. It was terrible to be hungry and cold. It was

beginning to get dusk, and the kind woman said she would walk home with Laura, for the crossings were bad on account of the automobiles.

When they got across South Street and to Copley Lane, the woman left Laura, for she was in a hurry to go back and get supper for her husband. "You are all right now," she said to the little girl.

"Yes, I'm all right now." She had a very pleasant walk, for she had told the woman how Tony had had the whooping-cough and she had not taken it, and how she had had the grippe and her temperature had gone up to a hundred and three. She had told the woman, too, how she and Tony were twins, and their birthday was coming on Saint Valentine's Day. She had found out that the woman had a son who had been to the war and had come home a little lame, and how she had two grandchildren. Altogether, it had been a pleasant walk.

Laura never remembered until she turned the handle of the front door that it was the kind that locked itself as you went out. Somehow she had expected to find Annie O'Brien waiting inside, but, of course, she had gone

home when she couldn't get in. There was her doll, Geraldine, sitting bolt upright at the parlor window. "My precious Geraldine," she said, kissing her hand to the doll, "you are very lucky to have stayed at home. It is a very cold day, and I was lost and I got very hungry. Geraldine, I am glad we gave your sweater money to the starving children. What did you say? I can't hear you through the window. That you want a new sweater? My darling child, I am ashamed of you. You are a perfect pig."

It would be some time before her mother got back. Laura did not like the idea of waiting in the cold. Neither did she like the idea of her mother coming home and not finding her inside. Perhaps the back door was not locked. She went around to the back of the house. Sandy was waiting patiently at the kitchen door for some one to come and let him in. He made a gay picture with his yellow coat, with the darker yellow stripes, against the side of the house.

"Oh, Sandy!" the little girl cried joyously.

Sandy came and rubbed himself against her feet. "Wroof, wroof," he said, in a pleasant way.

"I'm afraid you've been somewhere you oughtn't to have been," the little girl said reprovingly, as she looked at Sandy's black feet.

"Wroof, wroof," Sandy said again.

It almost seemed as if Sandy were saying, "How about you?"

Alas! the kitchen door was locked, but there was a window. She could climb up from the seat on the porch and get in that way if the window was not locked. Should she try to get in at the window? Or should she go over to the Lanes'? She did not like the idea of going over there. She would have to tell them how naughty she had been, and then her mother might come home while she was there and be worried. She climbed up on the seat on the kitchen porch and tried to push up the window. It was the window that was often opened to let Sandy out. Oh, how good! She could push it up. Sandy was there ahead of her and got in first. He walked straight over to the corner of the kitchen where his saucer of milk was. It was empty now. Laura scrambled in at the window.

"You want some milk, do you?" asked Laura.

Sandy came and rubbed himself against her

feet. She was just going to say, "Well, you'll have to wait until mother gets back," when she remembered how hungry she had been herself and how good the milk had tasted. So she went to the refrigerator and got out Sandy's milk for him. She spilled a few drops on the kitchen floor, and took a kitchen towel to wipe it up. Then she went into the front part of the house and took her things off and put them away.

Her mother was the first to come home. She found her small daughter sitting demurely before the electric lamp looking at pictures in a book.

"Well, dear, have you had a pleasant afternoon?" asked her mother.

"Yes."

"Where is your Aunt Laura?"

"She went on a sleigh-ride with Mr. Miles."

"And you have been alone all the afternoon?"

"Not all the afternoon, mother. I've had adventures."

"Adventures?"

"Yes, mother, I have been a very naughty little girl." And she told her mother the whole story from beginning to end.

She had just finished telling her story when Tony and Perry Airedale came in. They had had a wonderful afternoon.

"Was the skating good on Brown's Pond?" said Laura.

"We didn't go there. We went to another pond Harriet knew about. It was too bad you couldn't come, too. But it was awful cold. It was better you didn't go."

"Tony," she burst out, "I've been a very bad girl. I did go out, to try to find you. I got lost. I nearly froze, and I nearly starved."

Her Aunt Laura came in at the door just then. She looked cold and tired, and as cross as a pleasant person can look.

"Aunt Laura, I have been a very bad girl," little Laura said; and she told her story all over again. She made it more exciting each time.

"It is I who was the naughty girl," said Aunt Laura. "I oughtn't to have gone off and left you until Annie O'Brien came. I wish I had stayed at home. I didn't have a bit of a good time."

"Were you very cold? And did you get hungry?" Laura asked.

Her aunt did not answer.

"Are you going to punish me, mother?" little Laura asked.

Mrs. Marsh considered.

"Please don't punish her, mother," Tony broke in. "It was such an awful adventure. She got punished enough."

"Yes, please don't punish her," said Aunt Laura. "It was mostly my fault. We've both of us had a miserable afternoon. I think that is punishment enough."

"I am afraid she has punished herself," said Mrs. Marsh. "It looks to me as if she had taken more cold. I am afraid she will have to stay in bed to-morrow."

Which is just what happened.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOUBLE BIRTHDAY

THE children's birthday was Saint Valentine's Day, so they had presents and valentines, too. This seemed almost a waste, but it was better than to be born on Christmas, like Asa. Laura had a great many more valentines than Tony had, because she was a girl. But they had exactly the same number of presents, for no one could have the heart to give a present to one child and not to the other. They always had their presents directly after breakfast. They were put on a side-table in the dining-room, so that they could look at them all through the meal, and wonder what they were.

There was a large box for Tony, about a foot long and six inches high. He did wonder what was in it. He looked at the outside of it before breakfast. It was done up in white paper, and it was tied with green ribbon, his favorite color, and a card was tucked under the ribbon. It was tucked in so that the blank side showed, and it was not thought fair to touch a present until after breakfast. So Tony had no

idea who had given it to him. It could not be his mother, or his Aunt Laura, or Laura, for there were presents from each of them. He could see the names written plainly on the paper, and there was also a present from Miss Hattie Lane, and another from Harriet and one from Asa.

It was an especial breakfast, for everything was double, in honor of the double birthday. To begin with, there were daffodils in the center of the table — the double kind; and they could each have two saucers of oatmeal, and a double portion of cream. And they each had an orange cut in halves so as to make two portions. They each had an egg arranged in a double way, for it was on two half-slices of toast. They each had two pieces of bacon. The yellow daffodils and the bright oranges made the table look very gay. Mrs. Marsh brought in Sandy to give the final touch of yellow to the picture. She held him up before the mirror over the sideboard so that he might seem to be double. But he made such a frantic effort to get out of her arms and fight the cat he saw in the looking-glass, that Mrs. Marsh hastily dropped him. Sandy made his long wail, like the tuning of a violin — “Er, er, er,

er," he cried. Sandy was allowed to go outdoors, and then Perry came in. He walked around the table, and watched Tony help himself to a roll made in the shape of an hourglass so that it looked double. Tony held it lightly in his hand, and Perry made a spring and snapped at one end of the roll, taking hold of it with his teeth.

"He thinks it's his birthday," said little Laura, laughing in delight, as the double roll disappeared down Perry's throat. She firmly held on to her roll, so that Perry couldn't get it. When the double breakfast was over, Mrs. Marsh read aloud some verses she had written for the occasion.

Is it a trouble to have things double?
Not if the things are good.
I'd be no other than the twins' mother,
Let this be understood.
Yet when they're naughty and act like forty —
Like sixty, I should say —
Because they're double, they make more trouble;
It is their impish way.

When it was time to look at the presents, Laura was given her choice first. She at once picked out the one she wanted most, her mother's, for it was sure to be good. After she

had put the pretty pink beads around her neck, Tony had his choice.

"Look at the one in the box," Laura commanded.

"No," said Tony, "I like to keep the best for the last."

"I like to look at the best first," said Laura. "They are all best!" she cried joyously, as she took out a pink sweater with a white border that Aunt Laura had knit for Geraldine.

When all the presents had been looked at except the one in the box, Tony read the card:

"For Tony Marsh from his two friends, Henry Perry and Perry Airedale."

"Two Perrys," said Tony. "They are double."

And the present was double. There were two new and shiny skates that just fitted Tony. He was speechless at first with delight.

"How could he tell my size, away off in California?" Tony said. "What are you laughing at, Aunt Laura?"

Little Laura was looking at the pictures in the book that Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale had sent her. It was truly a wonderful birthday, for Harriet and Asa came to dinner. And here again things were double, for there

were two roast chickens, and a double quantity of vegetables, and every one could have two helps of ice-cream. Every child had two costume crackers, instead of one, and there were two chocolate peppermints, and there were two cookies to eat with the ice-cream. When the dinner was over, the children helped the older people with the dishes. And then Mrs. Marsh and Aunt Laura went off to write letters, and the children had the dining-room to themselves for the Magazine game, which they were never tired of playing. Laura was especially fond of it, for she was so quick she usually beat. While Tony and Asa were looking over their magazines, she would pounce on something and call out, "I'm going to have sardines for breakfast."

"Sardines? That isn't a proper food for breakfast," Tony said.

"My family are very fond of having sardines for breakfast," Laura said.

"That isn't fair, is it Harriet?" said Tony.

"I don't care whether it is fair," said Laura. "I always give my children sardines for breakfast."

And so it always went when Laura played with them. She fed her family on the strangest

food, but the game was very flat when Laura didn't play.

That evening, just before the twins went to bed, Aunt Laura sat down at the piano, and to their great delight she played all their favorite pieces over twice, once for Tony and once for Laura, and sang two verses of every song. And so ended the double birthday.

CHAPTER X

THE DOLL CONTEST

FEBRUARY was certainly a great month, for it had two holidays in it besides the twins' double birthday, and there was skating or coasting. March would have been quite a tiresome month, without any birthdays in it or any national holidays, if it hadn't been for playing marbles. But every boy knows what a joy this is. Asa and Tony played marbles every minute they could spare, when they were not in school. Then the spring came and the days grew longer and longer, and all sorts of buds began to show on the shrubs and trees. And other birds came besides the winter friends — woodpeckers, bluebirds, robins and golden-robins — and the Copley meadow, at the end of the lane, was full of song. Everybody was glad to have the long winter over; and Aunt Laura blossomed out in her pretty spring clothes; and little Laura had a new frock; and Tony had a new straw hat; Geraldine had a new dress with rosebuds on it, and a white straw hat with a wreath of tiny roses around it.

Tony did not care for dolls. He never wanted to play dolls with Laura, and when she asked him if he didn't think Geraldine was beautiful, he merely said, "Oh, she's well enough for a doll." Therefore, it was a great surprise to Laura when Tony came back from the village one day, and told her she ought to enter Geraldine for the doll contest.

"There isn't one of the dolls that can hold a candle to Geraldine," he said.

The village was the name that was given to that part of the town where the markets and the different shops were. Tony liked to go to the village. He and Perry Airedale went down on Saturday with Mrs. Marsh when she did her marketing, unless they had something more important to do. Laura did not go often, for she was usually playing dolls with Maud Saunders, her best friend for the time being. On this especial Saturday morning, Harriet had errands to do, so it was quite a large company that started forth — Mrs. Marsh and Harriet walking side by side, Tony and Asa running ahead, or lingering behind, and Perry Airedale who stopped often for tours of investigation on his own account.

When they came out of the market, they

found a crowd of people gathered about one of the shops, and presently a fire-engine dashed by.

"There's a fire!" Tony and Asa cried excitedly. "Oh, what a treat, mother!" said Tony.

"I am afraid they don't think it a treat at Blaisdell's," said Mrs. Marsh.

They all looked up and saw that the awning in front of the shop was on fire. The engine had arrived so quickly that the fire could be put out before there was any danger to the building.

"Look out, Asa, that you don't get wet," said Harriet.

Asa, who would not have thought of it if it had not been for the suggestion, moved so that the spray of the hydrant fell on him. He stood there with an impish grin on his face.

"Oh, Asa!" she said in despair, "why can't you be good like Tony?"

Tony felt ashamed to have this undeserved praise. If he had only been a little quicker, if his mother had not seized him by the hand, he would have been sprayed on, too. He looked enviously at Asa. It reminded him of the time, at the seashore, when he and his mother had got drenched by the spray.

"You'll have to come right straight back with me, and change your clothes," said Harriet, seizing Asa's hand.

So it happened that Tony and his mother and Perry Airedale were left together. They had moved outside the crowd, as the fire was out now, and they found themselves just opposite the candy-shop where the doll contest was going on. It was a new shop that was where the fruit store used to be. Tony stood rooted to the spot, for in the window were all sorts of dolls of various sizes. There was a card in the window, and on it was printed, "Doll Contest. Bring your doll and enter her. Prizes of a three-pound box of candy will be given for the prettiest doll, for the most old-fashioned doll, and for the best-dressed doll."

Tony looked at the dolls critically. There was not one in the window half so pretty as Geraldine, nor half so well dressed. To be sure, he did not care for dolls, but he took pride in his sister's dolls, much as a bachelor uncle, who gives out that he is not fond of children, takes a pride in his own nieces.

"Mother," he said, wriggling away from his mother's hand and going close to the window for a nearer look, "Laura ought to enter

Geraldine. She'd get two prizes — one for the prettiest, and another for clothes."

"Laura wouldn't want to give Geraldine up for two weeks. The contest is not over until May second."

"She could come down and look at her every day," said Tony. "Oh, mother," he said gripping her hand, "there is the starving child, the one we call Isabella."

"What do you mean?"

"She's the little girl who lives in the third house from the corner, on South Street, and she looks so thin and half-starved we call her Isabella. I am sure she isn't starving, for it is a nice house. She just looks the way the Invisible Guest would look, so we call her Isabella."

"Oh, that must be Mrs. Morse's granddaughter who has come to live with her. Miss Hattie Lane knows Mrs. Morse. The little girl can't really be hungry, for her grandmother is a rich woman."

It was just as Tony thought, when Laura heard about the doll contest, she longed to take Geraldine down to it. She did not stop to think that she might miss her. She just longed to have her own doll in the window with the others. And then it would be so grand if she

were to get a prize of three pounds of candy, or perhaps two prizes, and that would be six pounds. She wanted to run right over and tell Maud Saunders all about it. But she decided not to, for Maud's Adrianna was almost as pretty as Geraldine, and her clothes were even finer. So she thought she would keep it a secret from Maud. If Maud found out about it herself, that would be all right. There was no need of telling her.

Mrs. Marsh had gone to Boston to see a sick friend. Laura could not wait until the next day to enter Geraldine. Her mother did not like to have Laura go by herself to the village, for the crossings were so bad on account of the automobiles. But sometimes she let her go with Tony, he was so careful. Mrs. Marsh felt that a boy ought to take care of himself early. Aunt Laura had just stepped over to Mrs. Copley's with the Book-Club magazines, saying that she would not be gone long, so there was no one to tell that they were going to the village, except Sandy. He was stretched out on the window-seat in the parlor.

"Sandy, keep house for us, like a good fellow, until we get back," said Tony.

Perry Airedale went with them. They

reached the candy-shop without any serious adventures. When Laura saw all the dolls in the window, little and big, plain and handsome, she had a sudden pang. She felt homesick at the idea of leaving Geraldine in this crowd of strange dolls. It seemed a little like taking Sandy to a cat show, which they had never been willing to do because he would be so miserable. And, besides, how she would miss Geraldine! She did not like to say this to Tony, for he would say, "How silly — she is only a doll," which was true. They went into the shop, and saw a pleasant woman behind the counter, selling candy to a boy and a smaller girl.

"Do you want to enter your doll?" she asked Laura.

"Yes, please," said Laura.

"All right," said the woman.

She took two pieces of paper that looked like tickets out of a drawer. They had the same number printed on them — one hundred and nine. She pinned one number to the back of Geraldine's dress, and gave the other to Laura.

"Be sure and keep this ticket very safe," she said.

The next afternoon that Laura and Maud played together, Laura took one of her old dolls to Maud's house.

"Why have you brought Polly? Where is Geraldine?" Maud asked.

"She has gone away on a little trip. I expect she'll be gone 'til the first of May."

"Until the first of May?" said Maud. "How can you bear it?"

"I miss her terribly," said Laura.

"Where has she gone?" asked Maud.

Laura hesitated. "She's gone to a place her Uncle Tony told us about. He went with me. She seemed a little homesick when we left her, but I'm sure she'll make friends. There are a lot of others there. It is a nice warm house."

A few days later Maud came to play with Laura, bringing her Nelly instead of Adrianna. Maud had an eager little face, with a turned-up nose, dark hair, and gray eyes. She could be very pleasant, and she could be very cross. To-day she was very cross. She met Tony and Perry Airedale just outside the door.

"I think you and Laura were too mean for anything not to tell me about the doll contest," she said.

Tony shifted from one foot to the other un-

easily. "You never once came into my head," he said. Somehow, it did not sound very polite, but it was the truth.

"I expect I came into Laura's head," said the angry little girl.

She went into the house and when she found Laura she called out:

"Why didn't you tell me about the doll contest, Laura Marsh? I know it was because you were sure Adrianna would take a prize. You are a mean thing. And you told me she had gone away for a change."

"But she has," said Laura.

"You thought you could keep it secret from me," Maud went on, "when your child was in the front window of a candy-store for any one to look at. Bertha saw her there. She came home and said, 'There's a doll in the window of the candy-shop, where the doll contest is, and it is as like Geraldine as two peas. You had better enter Adrianna,' said she. So we marched right down, and, of course, I knew Geraldine. I knew her face all right, and I knew her clothes. No other doll had on a dress with rosebuds on it and a pink sweater, and a hat with a wreath of roses. I suppose you'll say, like Tony, that it didn't come into

your head to tell me about the doll contest."

Laura, whose temper was not easily ruffled, could never understand why Maud got so excited over trifles. Maud was more than a year older than she was — she ought not to get so angry.

"I remembered all about you," said Laura. "I never forget you and Adrianna."

"I suppose," said Maud, "you thought if I knew about it, I'd take Adrianna down, and she might get the prize."

"Yes," said Laura. "I thought my own child deserved to get it."

"You are very selfish," said Maud.

Laura said nothing.

"I never knew such a selfish little girl," said Maud.

"Then why did you come to play with me to-day if I'm so bad? Nobody asked you."

"I think I'll go home," said Maud.

"I think you'd better," said Laura.

Maud, who had not the faintest idea of going home, took off her hat.

"I'll stay with you this afternoon, Mrs. Marshmallow," she said, putting on her grown-up voice, "if you'll tell me you are sorry for what you did."

Laura held out her hand. "Mrs. Saunders-sunny," she said, "I'm glad you are going to stay."

After that, Laura and Maud went every day to the village to see how their children were getting on. Bertha, Maud's older sister, went with them, or Harriet, or Tony.

One day, when Bertha was their companion, Maud said, "My child is inside. I didn't like to have her in the window where everybody could look at her."

"My child isn't vain," Laura retorted. "I am not afraid of her being spoiled."

"What a queer-looking old doll," said Maud. "She wasn't in the window when I brought Adrianna down."

"There are lots more than when Geraldine came."

The doll was a wooden one, and quaintly dressed. There was a paper pinned to her dress which said, "This doll is the property of Mrs. Elbridge Morse. She is one hundred and one years old."

"What an old, old lady Mrs. Morse must be, if her doll is a hundred and one," said Laura.

"It must have belonged to her mother,"

said Bertha. "Mrs. Morse is the old lady who lives on South Street, and the little girl you call Isabella lives with her."

They were all startled by hearing a shrill voice say, "My name is not Isabella. Why did you think it was?"

Laura looked confused. Her impulse was always to tell the whole truth, but it didn't seem polite to tell her they called her that on account of the Invisible Guest, because she looked like a starving foreign child.

"We just thought you looked as if your name might be Isabella," said Laura. "It is such a pretty name."

"I think it is a horrid name," said the child. "It is so long. My name is Joan Morse. That's my grandmother's doll. My grandmother is not more than a hundred years old; she is seventy-five. It belonged to her mother."

Joan followed them when they went home. She did not take her eyes off Laura, unless to let them look at Maud. The poor little girl was, indeed, a starving child — not for food, but for playmates. But Laura and Maud did not know this. They walked along, hand in hand, not knowing how she longed to take the

hand of each. Bertha did not think anything about the little girl either. She looked around once or twice, and wondered why that tiresome child was following them. But something very pleasant happened just as they got to South Street. Harriet and Asa came down the street — kind Harriet, who had eyes and a heart for every one.

“Aren’t you Joan Morse?” she asked.

“Yes,” said the “starving child.”

“Everybody says your grandmother’s doll is the best in the show,” said Harriet. “She ought to take the prize for being quaint.”

The little girl’s face brightened. She had long admired Harriet at a distance. “Her name is Betsy,” said Joan.

“I suppose you go down every day to see how she is getting on?” said Harriet. “You look like a devoted mother.”

Again a smile lighted up Joan’s face.

“Asa and I were just going to take these oranges to your grandmother,” said Harriet. “Aunt Hattie had a box of them come from the South. Your grandmother told us last month you were coming to live with her.”

She took Joan’s hand, and when Laura and Maud saw them walk away in the direction of

Mrs. Morse's house, Joan looked bright and happy.

"She doesn't look like Isabella any more," said Laura. "She doesn't look like a hungry child. I expect she's glad to get the oranges."

CHAPTER XI

GIVING THE PRIZES

EVERY little girl who had entered her doll at the candy-shop — and by this time there were one hundred and sixty-three dolls there — hoped to get the prize, for each thought that her doll was the most beautiful, or else the best-dressed, or, if all else failed, the most original. Laura felt sure that Geraldine would take the prize for beauty; and Maud was certain no other doll was so well-dressed as Adrianna, while Joan hoped for the best on the strength of the quaintness of Betsy. She, alone, of the three, had her doubts about her doll getting a prize. And she did not care now whether Betsy got a prize or not, for she was so happy herself. It seemed to the lonely little girl, who had had such a hungry look in her eyes, as if all her dreams had come true. It had begun that afternoon in front of the candy-shop, when Laura had spoken of her as Isabella, and she had answered back. She had been watching the children for some weeks, ever since she had come to live with her grand-

mother — sometimes from the window, sometimes from the strip of green in front of the house where she used to play with Betsy, her grandmother's doll. She liked Harriet's looks best of all — she seemed so friendly. She liked Tony's looks next best — he was so kind to his dog. She was a little afraid of Laura, but she was a nice size to play with. She was not sure she should like Maud and Asa, or, at least, she was not sure they would like her. If only she could be one of that group of children, who seemed to know each other so well, she should be a very happy little girl. Her grandmother was a perfect dear, but she was too old to stoop down and make mud-pies, or to take long walks.

And then, there had come that wonderful afternoon when Harriet and Asa had walked back with her to her grandmother's; and Harriet had given them the oranges. Her grandmother was very glad to see Harriet, and presently, Joan could hardly believe her ears, she heard Harriet say, "Aunt Hattie was wondering if you wouldn't let Joan come and lunch with us to-morrow. Tony and Laura are coming over to play at our house in the afternoon. We are going to play the Magazine game."

Joan fixed her eyes searchingly on her grandmother.

"I don't know about lunch," her grandmother began. "Joan is very shy with strangers. I don't think she would care to go to lunch —"

"Oh, please, grandmother!" Joan begged.

"You would like to go?" her grandmother asked, surprised.

"I'd just love to go. Oh, please let me, grandmother!"

"Very well, if you like to go, you may. It is very kind of your aunt to ask her. I hope Joan will behave well."

"If she doesn't it won't make any difference," Harriet answered easily. "Asa often doesn't behave well."

This was the beginning, and after that, there was hardly a day in the week when Joan did not play at one or the other house, or else have at least one of the children at her house. Laura with her love for anything new, whether it was a doll or a child, took a great fancy to Joan. Joan was so interesting, and thought up such good games. Joan never lost her temper, the way Maud did. Tony and Asa liked Joan, too. Everybody, except Maud, was glad that

the "starving child," as they still called her, behind her back, had come into the neighborhood. Maud was not pleased at all.

"You like Joan better than you like me," she said one day to Laura. "It isn't fair. You've known me a lot longer."

"I like you both," said Laura, with a grown-up air.

"Well, I think you are perfectly horrid, Mrs. Marshmallow," said Maud, pretending that she was grown-up.

"Oh, I'm horrid, all right, Mrs. Saunders-sunny," Laura retorted. "You've told me that before. You don't have to play with me. I can play with Joan. She thinks I'm nice."

In short, Maud was a very tiresome little girl. "She's just like Sandy, mother. It's just the way he acts about Perry Airedale," said Laura one day. "Perry is so nice, and Sandy is so nice; they ought to be friends."

"Jealousy makes cats and dogs very unhappy," said Mrs. Marsh, "especially, if each wants to be first. It makes little girls unhappy, too. You must try and make Maud feel she isn't left out. Then she'll get fond of Joan, too. It is hard for her to see you so fond of a new little girl."

"But Joan's a lot nicer, mother. She always wants to play just what I want to play. And she's so bright."

"Yes, dear, I know all about it. But it seems as if all three of you children might play together and be happy. First Joan was miserable because she hadn't any one to play with. And now Maud is unhappy because you are fond of Joan. Suppose Joan and Maud got to be great friends, and you were the one to be left out, how would you like that?"

Laura paused to consider. "I'd play with Tony a lot, or I'd find up a new little girl."

"I suppose you would," said her mother, with a little smile. "Maud and Joan are different. They are like Perry Airedale. They are content with one friend. He is a one-man dog. He's fond of Tony, but do you suppose Tony will have any show when his old master comes back? Some children are like that. Maud and Joan are satisfied just to have you to play with. But you are like the dog we used to have when I was a little girl — he was always ready to go to walk with any new friend who came along. You must play with Joan and Maud together, so everybody will be happy. It is like making a good salad dressing. It needs the oil to mix

the vinegar and the red pepper and the salt together. You must be the oil."

"Maud is the vinegar all right," said Laura.

After this the friends had a better time. And it was a great bond that they all had dolls at the candy-shop.

More and more newcomers appeared in the window, or crowded the shelves. And more and more little girls jammed themselves into the thick of the crowd. The older people in the three families got interested. Mrs. Marsh hoped that Geraldine would not take a prize, for she did not like the idea of so much candy coming to the house. Still, she crossed over whenever she went to market, and looked in at the window. Certainly, there was no prettier doll in the show than Geraldine.

Mrs. Saunders made an especial trip to the village. Maud's doll was by far the best-dressed and the best-looking in the show, she said when she came back. She should never get any more candy at that shop if they were so unfair as not to give a prize to Adrianna.

One day when Joan and her grandmother were taking an airing in a taxi, they stopped before the doll-shop, and Mrs. Morse thought

how quaint and old-fashioned Betsy looked among the new-fangled dolls.

"I don't care whether Betsy takes a prize or not," said she; "I am sure we have interested a great many children by letting them see the sort of doll little girls played with a hundred years ago."

"She's all right to play with now, grandmother," said Joan. "I like her better than Geraldine, or Adrianna. She can't get broken."

"That is certainly a great point in her favor," said Joan's grandmother. "Geraldine and Adrianna will hardly be alive a hundred years from now."

At last the great day came — the day that the prizes were to be given out. The street was lined with children crowding up to the windows to see who had won the prize, and to claim their dolls. Nearly every child had a five-cent piece in her hand. For the day before this a sign had appeared in the window:

All children cannot win the prize,
But each can buy some candy.
To-day it's cheap; the price will rise,
So have a nickel handy.

As the children pressed through the crowd, they could see that there were three dolls sit-

ting above the others, on a box arranged like a bench. The figure in the middle was raised above the others. She wore a crown of may-flowers on her head.

"Gee," said a small girl in front of them. "The old one's got a prize. She's the Queen."

Joan, with Tony by her side, had pressed forward ahead of the others. Tony had taken a liking to Joan. She was the most sensible little girl he had ever seen. She was almost as good as a boy. So he was pleased to see that it was Betsy who was the May Queen. He expected to see Geraldine on one side of her, and possibly Adrianna on the other. He looked to the right, and a strange face gazed back at him; a golden-haired, blue-eyed doll, no prettier than Geraldine, but twice her size. He was greatly disappointed. He never had cared for those huge dolls. Perhaps Geraldine was on Betsy's left. But here again a perfect stranger gazed at him out of her somber, brown eyes. She wore a brown picture-hat, trimmed with a bow of ribbon and a tiny brown feather. She had a long brown coat with a fluffy collar and a muff, and a bit of blue frock showed below her coat. Tony was disgusted. Geraldine ought to have taken a prize. Then his eyes looked at

the cards that hung above the three dolls. Over the May Queen was hanging a card with these verses printed on it.

I've looked on all that came my way,
I've lived a hundred years they say.
And still they keep the first of May.

When I was young, I once was Queen,
And now, as then, the fields are green.
My heart is young, if not my mien.

Above the stranger on the right, who did not deserve her prize for good looks, Tony thought, was this verse:

I came in late;
I won the prize,
This was my fate,
To my surprise.

The verse above the doll on the left read as follows:

I never hoped the prize to win,
In home-made clothes like these.
But every stitch mama put in
Was sewed her child to please.

"I think it is a perfectly horrid contest," said Maud, as the three little girls were running home in front of their elders. "Mother said

she should never buy any more candy at that shop if Adrianna didn't get a prize." She was munching a chocolate drop as she spoke.

"The boxes looked so pretty all piled in a heap on the counter," said Joan.

As they had gone into the shop to claim their dolls and to buy five cents' worth of candy, they had seen hundreds of tiny boxes on the counter, blue, red, pink, yellow, and green. On the bottom of each box was printed the name of the candy-shop. Joan had insisted on having a red box — she had decided views about color; Tony was glad he had been given a green one; Laura had chosen a pink box; and Maud was very cross because she had chosen a yellow one and decided afterwards that she wished she had taken pink. She had not seen the pink boxes. She asked Laura to change with her, but Laura wouldn't change.

"I think Geraldine was a lot prettier than that fat thing that took the prize," Tony said to Laura, as they went into the house. "Don't you, mother?"

"I suppose it is natural that we should like her best," said Mrs. Marsh. "But perhaps it is all for the best. I have been afraid for some time that Geraldine was getting spoiled. She

seemed sure of getting the prize. The fat doll seems to have had a nice disposition."

"Well, anyway, I'm glad Adrianna didn't get a prize," said Laura. "She's dreadfully conceited about her clothes, and it is nice that Betsy got one. And Joan says she's going to give all of us some of the candy."

CHAPTER XII

THE SEASHORE AGAIN

Now that May had come, the buds on the bushes and trees were turning into green leaves and blossoms, and Mrs. Marsh began to talk about planting her garden at the seashore. She always got up very early and took a train from Boston that left at eight o'clock so as to have a long day to oversee the planting.

Her husband always used to go down with her. The last time he went was four years ago. Tony could just remember how his father and mother started off the last time together.

"Mother," said Tony, "now I am seven, I think I am big enough to go down with you and help plant the garden. We had such a good time together last year, when we waited over for Sandy."

His mother hesitated. "You'd have to get up very early," she said. "You don't like getting up early very well."

"Oh, mother, but for an important thing like that, I wouldn't mind getting up in the middle of the night."

“It would be a very long day, and I shall be busy. You’d get very tired.”

“I’d never get tired, mother.”

After all, it would be delightful to have the small boy’s company, and little Laura was invited to dine with Joan Morse and her grandmother, so she would not mind being left behind. So finally Mrs. Marsh gave in. She couldn’t have had the two children on her hands.

It was very exciting to get up so early, and steal about so as not to wake the others. Perry and Sandy were awake, and Sandy, as usual, was waiting at the door to be let out. Then Perry came and begged very hard to be allowed to go, too. It was hard to deny him, he was so persistent, and so unhappy at the idea of being left behind. Tony and his mother had bread and milk, for they were going to stop at the restaurant at the station and get a regular breakfast; and they went out into the crisp morning air.

Tony was all ready for adventures; not the kind Laura had had, but the pleasant sort one has on a bright May morning when one takes the train. Breakfast was the first adventure. It was so exciting to have it in the restaurant at the station.

"Tony, you can choose what you will have for breakfast," his mother said, giving him the bill of fare. She would not have dared to let Laura choose, for she would have chosen half a dozen of the most expensive things.

"Mother, what a lot everything costs," said Tony.

"Yes, but I am tired of getting my own breakfast at home. I thought as we were going off together we would have a real spree."

And there were no two people who had a better time on that bright May morning than the quiet lady in black and the small boy by her side. They had eggs, and then they had griddle-cakes, and Tony wished all the hungry little children abroad could be as well fed. He could not get them out of his head for many days at a time. He wondered if they played marbles. They might have had some left over since before the war.

Tony liked everything about the train. He even liked the smell of the smoke. "Doesn't it have a nice smell, mother?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, for she knew just what he meant. "It makes one think of all sorts of nice things that have happened and are going to happen."

"If only Perry Airedale could have come with us," Tony sighed. "Poor Perry, he did look so broken-hearted! Sandy didn't care; all he wanted was to go off with his own crowd. Mother, why are cats and dogs so different?"

"You must ask me something easier, Tony. Why are you and Laura so different? You were born on the same day."

Tony looked thoughtful. "Well, you see, she took after father, and I take after you," he said, repeating what he had heard his Aunt Laura say many times. "I'm glad I'm like you, mother."

"I hope you will never be sorry," she said with a little sigh. "But you are like your father in some ways; you often remind me of him."

The very names of the stations gave Tony a pleasant thrill. There was a taxi waiting for them when they reached their own station. Tony climbed into the front seat. He liked the front seat best. If one looked inland, it seemed very far from summer, for the grass was not so green and the buds on the trees were not so big as those at home; but when one looked toward the sea, it was just as if summer had come. It was so blue, and the sky was so blue, and the

gulls were flying about, and everything seemed more joyous than at home. And how good the wind felt, all full of the tang of the sea! As they drove up to the path that led to their own cottage, it seemed to the little boy as if they had never left it. George Anderson, the boy who did their planting, was there waiting for them.

"How do you do, old chap?" said George.
"How old are you now?"

"Seven," said Tony.

"That's a great age."

It was going to be a wonderful garden, with peas and beans, beets, chard, cabbages, squashes, tomatoes, and corn. There were to be flowers, too, on the slope of the hill, beside the house — nasturtiums, cosmos, salvia, blue larkspur, and poppies. Tony felt very important because he put in a few seeds and patted them down.

They had dinner at Mrs. Grover's, and this time Tony did not have to wear Mr. Grover's pajamas. As they were walking back to their own house, the most exciting adventure of all took place. They were just passing Mr. Perry's front door when it opened and out came Mr. Perry. He looked stronger than

when he went away, and there was a good color in his face.

"Why, Mr. Perry, I didn't know you had got back," said Tony's mother.

"I am only just back. I came down to do my planting."

They all walked along together, and they stopped when they came to the path that led to the beach. Mr. Perry talked about his journey and the sketches he had made. Finally he said, "How's your sister?" Tony thought he was speaking to him, so he began, "She's all right now, but she had the grippe and a temperature of one hundred and three, and she got lost, trying to find the pond."

Mr. Perry began to laugh. Tony, who was usually silent with grown people, always wanted to tell everything to Mr. Perry.

"How is your aunt?" Mr. Perry asked.

"She's all right."

"And how is my friend Rascal?"

"You mean Perry Airedale? He is all right. He wanted to come with us to-day awfully. He was dreadfully disappointed not to come."

Mr. Perry took Tony into his house while Mrs. Marsh went back to her planting.

"I suppose you'll all be coming down pretty soon?" he said.

"As soon as school is over, next month. We'll all come down then — mother, Aunt Laura, Perry, Laura, and Sandy."

It was altogether a wonderful day, and yet, when Tony got back at night and told little Laura about it, she didn't think there was anything to it at all. The only nice thing she could see about it was that they had seen Mr. Perry.

"Did he ask about me?" said little Laura.

"Yes, and I told him you had the grippe and had a temperature of one hundred and three."

"Wasn't he very sorry?"

"I guess so. He just went on asking about the whole family — Aunt Laura, and Perry Airedale — he called him Rascal."

"What are you smiling at, Aunt Laura?" the little girl asked.

"I am glad to be in the same class with Perry Airedale."

At last the time came when the whole family were to go back to the seashore for the summer. It was good to have two homes. It was too bad that Harriet and Asa did not have a house there, too. But Miss Hattie had

promised that they should go to them for a visit.

“A really long visit,” Mrs. Marsh had said — “not any of your makeshift affairs of a week. They must come for at least three weeks.”

The trunks were at last packed. Tony and Laura kept bringing their mother so many last treasures to pack that she was in despair. But finally everything was in. Then she had to pull and tug on the cover to shut it, and do what she would she could not make the hasp go into its place.

“Get on top, Tony, and stamp on it,” said his mother.

Laura was on top before Tony could get there. The two children held on to each other, as if they were dancing.

“Mother, I can say ‘shut up’ now, can’t I?” said Tony.

“Shut up, old trunk; old trunk, shut up, shut up, shut up!” he and Laura cried in chorus. And they danced up and down on the trunk again. Finally it yielded.

“It has shut up, mother; it really has,” said Tony.

Tony never could get used to that first glimpse of the sea, when they got near the

house. To-day it was bright blue — as blue as when he saw it last month. The air was so fresh, and the sky seemed to bend over the sea, and where they met there was a misty horizon line. As they stopped before the path that led to the house, there was a smell of wild roses in the air. The two Japanese rosebushes were in blossom, one on each side of the path. The one on the right side was pink, and that on the left was white. They were both of them covered with little tight-shut buds among the green leaves, and there were some half-opened buds and a few fully opened blossoms.

“May I have one, mother?” Laura asked, as she fingered a spray of pink roses.

“Yes, dear; Tony will cut one for you with his jack-knife.”

“It is my Tony-knife,” he said, as he proudly took it out of his pocket.

He cut a spray of the pink roses for Laura. Then he cut a spray of the white roses for his mother.

“Thank you, Tony,” she said, as she fastened them into her coat. “You remind me so of your father.”

That evening they heard the brass knocker pounding against the front door.

"I know it is Mr. Perry. I'm going to let him in," and little Laura slipped down from her chair, and ran to the door. But two had got there ahead of her — Aunt Laura and Perry Airedale. Perry Airedale was almost devouring his old master in his joy at seeing him.

"Well, Rascal, old fellow, I'm mighty glad to see you again," said Mr. Perry.

The dog wagged his tail at the sound of the old familiar name. Tony felt that he wished he had a tail to wag — there seemed no other way in which one could show one's pleasure half so well.

"Well, old man," said Mr. Perry, "I'm mighty glad to see you, too."

He caught little Laura up in his arms and gave her a hug and a kiss, and he seemed very much pleased to see their mother. After he had made a short call, he asked Aunt Laura if she would walk down the road with him to see his water-garden.

"We'll come, too," said Laura. "Tony and I want to see the water-garden."

"You will stay just where you are, children," said their mother. "When Mr. Perry wants to show you the water-garden, he'll invite you to go to see it."

“I don’t believe he knows how much we want to see the water-garden,” said Laura.

She looked wistfully down the road. Aunt Laura and Mr. Perry were talking very fast, and Perry Airedale was walking along after them. Every once in a while he leaped up joyously on his master.

“Perry Airedale is going to walk with them, mother,” said Laura. “I don’t see why I can’t. I don’t believe Perry was invited.”

CHAPTER XIII

SUMMER DAYS

MR. PERRY was painting a picture. It was not at all the one he had meant to paint. But if everybody will insist on coming into one's picture what is one to do? The trouble began with Perry Airedale. When Mr. Perry came back with Aunt Laura that first evening, he told the children that they could keep the dog, as he was expecting to go to California again the next autumn. But Perry took matters into his own paws. He simply insisted on living with his old master. The children made many excursions to Mr. Perry's studio, hoping to entice Perry Airedale back again, but he stayed in the studio, close to his master. He was not willing to risk losing him again. It was not altogether convenient having the children coming so often to the studio, for Mr. Perry was at work on an important picture. Laura could never go into the studio without stopping to look at everything and asking about everything. Tony was quieter,

but he was always trying experiments with Perry Airedale.

One evening, when Mr. Perry was calling at their house, he said, "I think the only way out of this difficulty is for me to paint a picture up here. Miss Laura, if you will sit for me under the pine tree, near the cinnamon rosebush, the children will have Rascal right on the place."

"I'm too restless a person to sit for my picture," said Aunt Laura, "and, besides, I am very busy, and I want to do a lot of reading this summer."

"The very thing," said Mr. Perry. "I will paint you reading to yourself under the pine tree, and you must wear the white dress you had on last evening, with the gauzy pink scarf."

So the picture was begun. And Perry Airedale was the first to walk into it, for he planted himself near Aunt Laura's feet. So instead of being a picture of a lady sitting under a tree reading, it became a picture of a lady and a dog. But this was by no means all that happened. Tony missed Perry Airedale very much more than Laura did, because Perry had been his constant companion. And so, every after-

noon, when Mr. Perry came to paint the picture, Tony would come out and sit on the grass by Perry Airedale.

Little Laura was very much absorbed in a brand-new little girl, Sally Marston, who lived in a summer cottage down the road.

"Tony," his aunt said, the first time he came, "you are not in the picture. You must move farther off."

"Then I can't pat Perry Airedale's head. I like to be near enough to give him a pat once in a while." Tony was glued to the spot, just as much as Perry Airedale was.

Finally Mr. Perry decided to put him in the picture, too. So instead of a lady reading, as it was at first, or a lady and a dog, as it was next, the picture was that of a lady, a dog, and a small boy. But this was not all that happened. A day came when the Marstons took Sally over to Salem for the whole day. On that day Laura tagged Tony's footsteps all day long. When he went to sit for his picture, Laura went, too.

"You'll have to sit on those steps so you won't be in the picture," Tony said severely.

"I shall sit just where I please," said Laura with spirit. "I am not going to be told by you

where to sit, Tony Marsh. I am as old as you are, and a lot bigger."

Little Laura moved over into the middle of the picture, close to Perry Airedale. She fitted in so well with her yellow hair and her pale green frock that Mr. Perry said, "Stay just where you are. If you want to be in the picture you will have to sit very still and come every day. Think it over. If you don't want to sit very still and come every day, you can move over and sit on the steps. If you want to be in the picture, you will have to sit still."

But Laura was a very restless child. She wanted to be in the picture, and yet she did not want to sit still. She wanted to be both in it and not in it — in it part of the time, and the rest of the time out of it. So many things happened when she was in the picture. First Sandy walked by, and that started up Perry Airedale. And then a yellow butterfly lighted on the rosebush, so she had to go over and examine that. And some callers came and interrupted the painting, for they came to see Aunt Laura as well as Mrs. Marsh. Mrs. Marsh took the callers into the house to give them some lemonade, and when little Laura heard

there was to be lemonade, she followed them into the living-room.

That was certainly a wonderful summer — everybody said so, even Aunt Laura, who was the most critical one in the family. Tony had never enjoyed a summer so much, for Asa and Harriet stayed with them for a whole month. Laura was very happy, for Sally Marston was the nicest little girl she had ever played with. She was never cross like Maud, and she was even sweeter than Joan, being just as generous about playthings, and having more of them to share. As for Perry Airedale, one only had to look at his tail to see how happy he was in getting back to his old master. Sandy was silent in these days. He was too busy to say “Wroof, wroof,” or perhaps he was getting too old for it, but if it is true that actions speak louder than words, Sandy was very happy. He went off early in the morning, and sometimes he stayed away all night; and when he came back he would devour all the fish he could get besides drinking three saucers of milk.

“He’s got quite an appetite, mother. I guess the sea air is good for him,” said Tony one night.

"I have noticed that the sea air has a good effect on other people's appetites," his mother said dryly.

This summer the children learned to swim, and it was Mr. Perry who taught them. They went on picnics, they dug for clams, they were out of doors almost as much as Sandy was, only they always came back at night.

One day Mr. Perry said he was going sketching at the cove, near the Nanawashan House, and he asked Aunt Laura if she would like to go with him. But before she could reply little Laura said, "I'd love to go, and I know Sally would — and Tony and Asa and Perry Aire-dale and Harriet and mother. Oh, please, can't we have a picnic, and take our supper?"

Aunt Laura began to laugh. "Do children always tag after you like this?" she asked Mr. Perry.

Laura had already gone to find her mother, and tell her how they were to have a picnic at Sandy Cove, if she was willing. She was willing, and they all went on the picnic. It was very beautiful at Sandy Cove. Tony had never seen a place he liked better — the sea glistened so in the sun, and there were two

boats with sails that looked as white as the sea gull's wings. There was the good salt smell of the sea, and a rim of brown seaweed along the edge. The tide was half in, but creeping up so silently one did not notice it, like Sandy when he had a bird in view. It seemed a pity Sandy could not have come along to this cove that had his name. The children scampered about on the beach until they were tired, and then they dug wells in the sand. And then Tony and Asa took off their shoes and stockings and waded in. Laura and Sally were so busy digging wells they did not notice this at first.

"Tony and Asa are wading in the water, mother. May Sally and I go in wading?" Laura asked.

So Laura and Sally went in wading, too. When they were completely tired out, they flung themselves down in the sand, close by Mr. Perry. Tony was watching the sea and the sailboats, for some more had come in sight. Laura was greatly interested in the hotel and the people who came out of it or went in. Asa discovered a basket full of squirming, green lobsters that two men were carrying in the direction of the hotel.

"How funny," he said. "I didn't know

there were green lobsters. I never saw any but red ones."

"Is that all you know about lobsters, Asa Lane?" little Laura said with fine scorn. "They are always green. It is cooking them that makes them red."

"I guess you wouldn't know they were born green if you hadn't lived at the seashore every summer," Tony retorted.

Mr. Perry seemed thinking very hard for a few minutes, and then he said,

Sing a song of seaweed, a pocket full of fish,
Four and twenty lobsters boiled in a dish.
When the dish was opened they'd turned to red from
green,
Wasn't this a dainty dish to set before the queen?

This set Asa to thinking, and presently he said:

Mr. Perry picked a peck of pickled peppers.
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Mr. Perry picked?

"Now you make one up for me," Asa said to Harriet.

After a moment's silence she said:

Abominable Asa ate an armful of acid apples.
Where's the armful of acid apples abominable Asa ate?

They went round in turn, making a sentence

for each name, little Laura insisting every time that they should make one for her. Her aunt finally made one:

Little Laura lost a lot of lemon lozenges.

Where's the lot of lemon lozenges little Laura lost?

"Now, Tony, you must make one for your mother," said Aunt Laura.

Katharine seemed hopeless. In vain Tony tried to get in something about kindest Katharine and her kangaroo. He could not manage it. Finally he burst out with:

Mother Marsh made a mess of mildewed marmalade.

Where's the mess of mildewed marmalade that Mother Marsh made?

Their next picnic was the afternoon they went to dig for clams. They were going to have supper on the beach, with a real fire, and cook some of the clams and roast some corn. The children thought it was great fun to help gather driftwood for the fire. After the supper had been eaten, and they were sitting around the fire — for it was a cool evening — Tony looked up at the sky. It was bright sunlight still, and yet there was a white moon. He had often noticed a white moon on summer after-

noons, and yet he could never make it seem natural.

“How white the moon is!” he said. “It seems almost as funny as green lobsters.”

Mr. Perry half shut his eyes. This was a way he had when he was making a nonsense verse. The children waited eagerly.

Hey diddle diddle!
Young Lane's in the middle —
The Moon has jumped over the Cow;
The little Dog laughed
To see such sport,
For he's just a Rascal now.

“Make up another — please make up another one!” the children begged.

Again Mr. Perry half closed his eyes.

Tom, Tom, the sailor's son,
Stole an eel, and away he run;
Tom was beat,
The eel was fleet,
The eel went wriggling down the street.

“Make up one about Tony getting that awfully hot mouthful of clam chowder,” said Laura.

Mr. Perry looked thoughtful. Presently he said;

A little boy named Tony
Sat where it was stony,
Eating his chowder and corn.
He ate the hot chowder,
But cried louder and louder,
“I’m burnt. Oh, why was I born?”

“Make one for Laura about the time Sandy
swiped the fish,” begged Tony.

Little Miss Spice-box
Went to the ice-box
To get her poor cat some fish.
But when she got there,
The ice-box was bare,
For Sandy had cleaned the dish.

It was getting late, the tide was coming up
fast, the moon was beginning to turn from
white to silver.

“We ought to be going home,” said Mrs.
Marsh.

“That is what you always say, mother, when
things are getting the most interesting,” said
Laura.

“Somebody has to say it, and I seem to be
the oldest of the party.”

“Do make up one more Mother Goose
rhyme,” begged the children.

Mr. Perry closed his eyes and nodded his
head, as if he were already half asleep.

Hickory, dickory, dock,
The sea has covered the rock.
When the clock strikes one, down the sea will run.
Hickory, dickory, dock.

CHAPTER XIV

A TRIP TO TOWN

THE grapes were ripening in the grape arbor. There were great bunches of purple ones hanging down from the top, and all along the sides. It made one's mouth water to look at them. Very soon they would be ripe enough to pick, but the problem was how to secure them for themselves, for the year before they had been stolen.

"We could put up a sign, 'Beware of the dog; he bites,'" said Aunt Laura. "We might borrow Perry Airedale until the grapes are ripe."

"He wouldn't stay," said Mrs. Marsh.

And then she had a bright idea. They might tie a string across the arbor in such a way that thieves would run into it, and attach a bell to the string so that it would ring if any one touched the string. If it was a bell with a piercing sound, it would rouse the household and frighten away the thieves. Everybody pronounced this a good plan, and the children could hardly wait to have it tried. But they

had no bell, so they would have to go to the neighboring town to buy one.

Aunt Laura said she would get the bell the afternoon that she went to the dressmaker. Tony always loved a trip to town. It was such fun to go in the omnibus! It was a small city compared with Boston, but it was very interesting with its wharves and its boats, and its strange smells. Tony would have liked to go to town every day, except that there were so many other things he wanted to do even more. He did not want to give up his daily swim, even for a trip to town. And a picnic was better than town — or a sail. But after it had grown too cold to swim, going to town was great fun. Tony had a way of sitting on top of one of the stone pillars that stood, one on each side of the path, and waiting until whoever was going to town came down the steps. Then he would say, "Can I go with you?" He had found this was better than to ask beforehand. If he asked beforehand, whoever was going to town was sure to say, "Not to-day, Tony, I have too many errands to do." But if he appeared with clean hands and face, sitting on the top of the stone pillar, all ready for a trip in the omnibus, it was hard to resist him.

When his Aunt Laura appeared, Tony slid down from the post.

"Please, Aunt Laura, mayn't I go to town with you?" he asked.

She hesitated. "I have other errands to do besides getting the bell; and you'll get bored to death waiting at the dressmaker's."

"I don't get bored," said Tony.

"I can't wait for you to wash your hands," said Aunt Laura. "The 'bus will come along any minute. I can't wait for the next one."

Tony put up two well-scrubbed hands, but said nothing.

"So you've washed your hands, for a wonder," said Aunt Laura. "I suppose you've been planning all along to come with me."

Tony said nothing. His silence was as effective as Sandy's, when he waited at the door to be let out. Somehow, one hadn't the heart to disappoint either of them.

"I'll come down to the 'bus with you, anyway," said Tony.

"Oh, come along, old scout, if you must. I suppose you must," said Aunt Laura.

After all, it was pleasant to have the small boy with her. He took such an interest in the different errands. He loved helping to choose

the bell. His ideas about the bell were good ideas; it must have a clear, piercing sound, that would wake one out of a sound sleep, if robbers were coming to steal the grapes. Tony rang the different bells vigorously. Everybody in the shop turned and looked at him.

“For goodness’ sake,” said Aunt Laura, “I shall be sorry I let you come with me, if you are going to make so much noise!”

“But we must get a good bell that will scare away the robbers,” he said.

The dressmaker lived on one of the principal streets of the town. The house was on the corner of a small side street. Tony could get a glimpse of wharves and of the sea at the end of the street. He noticed that the dressmaker lived in a brick house with green blinds. There was a shiny gilt number on the house — forty-one. Aunt Laura and Tony went into the house. The dressmaker came into the front room. There was a carpet on the floor — green with garlands of pink roses and green leaves. Tony thought it was a beautiful carpet. Aunt Laura undid a bundle, and took out some silver cord and fringe that Tony had helped her buy.

“Yes, that is just the finish I want,” said the

dressmaker. "The gray voile is all ready to try on, Miss Marsh. Will you come into the other room? This little gentleman, maybe, will like to look at a picture-book."

"Please, Aunt Laura, can't I go out of doors?" Tony begged.

Aunt Laura felt that Tony was to be trusted. "Don't go out of sight of the house. You can go around the block, if you like. It will take about half an hour to try on my dress, won't it?"

"Maybe I can get through in half an hour, and maybe I can't, Miss Marsh. It depends on how many alterations I have to make."

"All right," said Tony.

He was off like a shot. The house was so stuffy. Out of doors there was the nice smell of the sea, and the funny fishy smell that he always smelled when he came to town. At first Tony stood on the doorstep sniffing the fresh air and the fishy smell, and watching the people who passed by. First some men came by, then some women, then some more men, a woman again, then a young girl. More men, more women, finally a woman with a little boy. The little boy looked at Tony, and Tony looked at the little boy. He was two or three

sizes smaller than Tony — a baby child, he thought — probably not more than four. Still, he was a little boy. Tony longed to know what his name was. But he was too shy to ask, for, after all, it was no business of his what the little boy's name was. They passed.

“Sammy, don't pull my hand so,” said his mother.

So the little boy's name was Sammy. Tony was glad to know this important fact. Well, he guessed he would take a walk now, around the block, as Aunt Laura had said he might. He walked along the street, turning to look back now and then, to keep the house in sight. Presently he heard music. It was, oh, joy, it was a hand-organ and a monkey! The monkey had on a red jacket and green trousers, and a green cap. He took off his cap and held it out, for a possible penny. Tony hadn't any money. He told this to the man who was making this wonderful music. “I haven't a bit of money with me,” he said. “I came to town with my aunt.”

“Never mind, old chap,” said the man.

Tony followed them from one house to another. Sometimes they got several coppers, and sometimes a nickel. Once a nice-looking

girl in a blue dress, with a white apron and cap on, came out of a house with a ten-cent piece in her hand. "Please," she said, "there's a very sick child in the house, and the music disturbs her. Take this and move on." Tony moved on with them. How strange it seemed that somebody should pay more to have the organ-grinder stop playing than to have him keep on. He was very sorry for the poor child; he wondered whether the girl was about the size of Laura. She must be very sick not to like to hear the music. They had gone quite a distance from the sight of the brick house where the dressmaker lived, but Tony knew just how to get back to it.

And then a most exciting thing happened. A fire-engine dashed along the street. So there was a fire. Probably a real fire this time, and not the miserable fizzle of a fire that got put out so quickly the day they went to the market and discovered the doll contest. Tony left the monkey and organ-grinder without stopping to say good-bye, and ran as fast as he could after the fire-engine. A crowd of boys and men, with a sprinkling of women and girls, suddenly appeared as if they had sprung up out of the ground. The children raced around

the street corners, Tony after them, until finally the fire-engine stopped in front of an old house on the edge of the town. Smoke was puffing out of one of the chimneys.

"It's just a chimney on fire!" said a rough-looking man near Tony. "I should think they could have put it out without gettin' out the fire-department. What a sell!"

Tony agreed with the man. Surely he was very unlucky about fires. He heard a bell ring presently to tell that the fire was out. And a little later another bell — one, two, three, four, five. "Goodness, that was five o'clock! Who could have believed that half an hour could go so fast?" Tony had forgotten all about his aunt and the 'bus that left for home at half-past five. He had forgotten that he had a home, or an aunt waiting for him to go to that home, or a mother. Life had been so exciting, first with the organ-grinder, and then with the fire-engine, that he had forgotten everything that he ought to have remembered. He felt like Cinderella at the ball when the clock struck. Only this one struck five, not twelve. Suddenly he remembered that he was Tony Marsh. "If it be I, and I think it be, I've a little dog at home, and he'll know me," he said.

Tony did not have the least idea how to get back to the dressmaker's house. He did not know the name of the street she lived on, or her name. All he knew was that she lived on one of the chief streets of the town, in a brick house, and that the number was forty-one. Tony felt as if he were in a bad dream. How could he ever find his way back? To make things worse, he was so shy that he did not like to ask his way. And what could he ask for? It sounded so silly to say, "Can you tell me where a dressmaker lives? I don't know her street or her name, but the number is forty-one." So he walked first in one direction, and then in the other. When Laura was lost, Tony wondered how she could have been so stupid as to lose her way. And now he was lost in a strange town, far from home. The tears came into Tony's eyes, he felt so lonely. But he wasn't going to cry, for he was a boy. He was too old to cry. He was seven years old, and seven months over. He felt as if he were going around and around in a circle. If only he could find a policeman. Policemen always knew everything. Here was a postman, perhaps he would know where the dressmaker lived. The postman was just going up the steps of a

house. Tony watched him slip some letters in a slit in the door and ring the bell. When he came down, Tony got up his courage to speak to him.

"Please," he said, very shy, and speaking so low that the postman could hardly hear what he said, "I want to find a dressmaker who lives in a brick house — it is number forty-one."

"Number forty-one on what street?" asked the postman.

"I don't know."

"What is her name?"

"I don't know."

The postman considered. "I don't think there is any such person on my route. How does it happen that you don't know her name, or the street she lives on?"

"I came over from Rocky Cove with my aunt. She's at the dressmaker's, waiting for me."

"How did you happen to be off here by yourself?"

"First I followed the monkey and the hand-organ, and then there was a fire."

"I see," said the man. "Well, I was a little boy once myself. Monkeys and fires are very enticing."

"It was a very disappointing fire, just a chimney, and they put it out right off," Tony confided to the postman.

The postman was considering the case.

"If I were you," he said, "I'd go over to where the omnibus starts for Rocky Cove. Then if your aunt doesn't come you can take it home."

"I haven't any money," said Tony.

"I guess they'd trust you for the fare, if you told them your story," said the postman. Then he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a ten-cent piece. "That will fix it so you'll be all right," he said.

Tony did not like to take the postman's money, for he did not see how he could ever get it back to him.

"What is your name?" asked Tony.

"Never mind about my name. If you don't have to use the money for the 'bus, you can spend it for candy. Walk right along that street, take the first turn to the right, then the second to the left. If you get lost again, just ask for the corner near the post-office, where the 'bus starts for Rocky Cove."

Tony got to the place at last where the 'bus started. He was tired, and he thought of sit-

ting down on the steps of the post-office. But he felt that he was too old to do that. When one is seven and a half and a boy, one does not like to own one is tired. He watched the 'bus as it came from Rocky Cove. It was full of people. They all scrambled out, and the 'bus was quite empty. Then a new set of people began to scramble in. If only Aunt Laura would come along! But she did not come. Tony began to wonder if he ought to scramble in, or wait for the next 'bus. They went only once in half an hour. Perhaps Aunt Laura was waiting for him at the dressmaker's. If only he could get home, his mother would know what to do. She would know the name of the dressmaker. Perhaps she could telephone. How much trouble he was making! And all on account of the monkey and the fire that wasn't any good after all. But the monkey was great. He would have been sorry to miss the monkey. He could have found his way back from the monkey to number forty-one, if it had not been for the fire.

Well, he'd got to decide what to do pretty quick, or the 'bus would start off and leave him behind.

Just then he heard a voice say, "Well, here

you are, old scout, you've given us quite a fright."

It was the beloved voice of Mr. Perry. In his joy at seeing this dear friend, Tony almost flung himself into his arms.

"We'll let that 'bus go and wait for the next one," said Mr. Perry. "Your aunt is waiting for you at the dressmaker's, in case you turned up there. I thought, as you were late, you might have gone right to the 'bus, so I came to look for you, and here you are."

Mr. Perry had been sketching down by the wharves. He had left his easel and his paint-box at the dressmaker's.

Aunt Laura was looking out of the front window of the dressmaker's house. When she saw them coming along, hand in hand, she ran out quickly to meet them.

"What did become of you, Tony Marsh?" she said. "You gave me one of the greatest scares of my life! I thought maybe you'd tumbled off a wharf into the sea and got drowned."

"I didn't go near the water," said Tony. "First there was a monkey — such a nice monkey, Aunt Laura, with a little green cap; and then the fire-engine came along, so I went

to the fire. It was a horrid fire — no good — just a chimney.”

As they walked along slowly, for the next 'bus was not due for twenty minutes, Mr. Perry told Aunt Laura about the journey he was to take to California very soon. “I hope it will be the last year I'll have to go,” he said. “I expect I'll be cured and ready to live in any climate after that — and then —”

Tony did not hear any more, for suddenly, around the corner of the street, came the hand-organ and the organ-grinder and the monkey. Once more the monkey held out his cap for money. Tony was holding the ten-cent piece that the postman had given him for the omnibus fare. Tony slipped the dime into the monkey's cap. Aunt Laura and Mr. Perry were standing still on the sidewalk, a little way off, talking very earnestly. They did not see him or the monkey. He ran back to where they stood.

“Here they are,” he said, “the monkey and the organ-grinder. I'm so glad they came along! Isn't he a great monkey?”

“It has been a great day,” said Mr. Perry.

CHAPTER XV

THE GRAPE ARBOR

THE grapes were nearly ripe now — in fact, they could be picked any day and ripened in the house, if it had not been that Mr. Perry was making a sketch of the grape arbor, with Aunt Laura picking grapes. She stood inside the arbor with some bunches in a basket she was holding in one hand, while she had her other hand on a bunch just ready to pick it. It was certainly going to be a beautiful picture, every one said, with the purple grapes among their green leaves, and Aunt Laura in a lilac gown, which looked so well with her yellow hair. But the weather was not favorable. It often rained, and the picture had been begun on a bright day, so Mr. Perry had to have sunlight for it.

The children sometimes played in the grape arbor on rainy days, for the thick bunches of grapes and the leaves, although some rain came through the spaces between, were almost as good as an umbrella. Nobody had come to

steal the grapes. The children were sorry; they did not want the grapes stolen, but it would be such fun to hear the bell ring, and then to dash out and catch the thief, who would be thrown down by the string and would be caught before he could get away. Tony and Laura each had a make-believe house of their own in the grape arbor. Tony lived on one side of the string, and Laura on the other. She played that she and her daughter, Geraldine Marshmallow, were at a summer hotel, and that Tony was the landlord. Or that she was placing her child at school, and that Tony was the schoolmaster. There was no end to the games that they played. They were always careful not to touch the string. And then one morning, Asa and his Aunt Hattie, who were making a visit in Salem, came over for the day. It rained; everybody was disappointed; and then Tony said, "Let's go and play in the grape arbor."

Now Asa had no idea of playing in a grape arbor and not eating the grapes. What were grapes for except to be eaten?

"They are not quite ripe," said Tony.

"Yes, they are," said Asa, and he broke off a large bunch.

"Oh," cried Tony in dismay, "that's the

bunch that Mr. Perry is painting in his picture — the one Aunt Laura is holding!”

“Is it?” said Asa. He felt troubled, but he did not show it. “He’ll have to paint another bunch. They are good. They are ripe all right. Have some.” He generously divided the bunch. As it was spoiled for picture purposes, there did not seem to be any reason why they should not all have a taste. The grapes were very good.

“Let’s play that boys have come and stolen the grapes,” Asa suggested. “Let’s ring the bell and then hide. It will be fun to see everybody come rushing out. We can hide behind the stone wall.”

Tony did not think this a game the older people would enjoy, but it was too tempting, and as for Laura, she never thought whether they would like it or not. It would be great fun. So Asa stuffed his pockets with grapes.

“You and Laura can hide behind the wall,” said Asa, “and I’ll come in a jiffy, after I have rung the bell.”

Tony and Laura hid behind the wall, and then Asa gave the string a hard pull. The bell rang loudly. Asa went quickly through the gate and hid behind the wall. Presently feet were heard coming nearer, and voices.

"Whoever stole the grapes has escaped," said Mrs. Marsh.

"What a shame! He has taken my bunch of grapes that Henry Perry was painting," said Aunt Laura.

"They have not taken many bunches," said Miss Hattie Lane. "I should not know any had been taken. It is lucky you had the bell arranged as you did. I wonder how he got off so quickly; he must have been thrown down. I'm sure it was a boy. I would not trust any boy, not even my nephew."

A giggle came from the other side of the wall, and presently Asa's head came up above it, and then Tony's head, and last of all Laura's.

"Well, children," said Mrs. Marsh, "I am surprised. I thought I could trust you."

"I am not in the least surprised," said Miss Hattie Lane. "I am only surprised that you have not lost any grapes before. If this is the first time, I am very much afraid that Asa is to blame. Come here, Asa. Yes, his pockets are stuffed with grapes. Oh, what will you do next! It is lucky it isn't your best jacket."

"I told you it wasn't any use to wear good clothes to a place like this," said Asa, as he looked at his juice-stained pockets.

"I ought not to have brought you with me," said Miss Hattie. "I shall have to punish you by leaving you at home next time." But as it was so late in the season that there could not be a "next time" this year, this did not seem a very hard punishment.

"I ate some of the grapes, too," said Tony.

"And so did I," said Laura.

Mrs. Marsh, who had suspected that this was the case, was glad that they had owned up.

"Well," said Miss Hattie, "I suppose they were too tempting."

It was the very next evening that the bell rang again. Mrs. Marsh had been planning to pick the grapes the next day. It had been a sunny afternoon, and Mr. Perry had put the last touches to his picture. It was getting dark, and the children were just about to go to bed, when the bell rang violently, and they heard a heavy sound, as though some one had fallen.

"It's the thief. I guess we can catch him all right," said Tony.

Everybody hurried to the spot, but Tony was the first to get there. There he saw Mrs. Grover who was bringing back their

washing. She had been tripped up by the string, and had fallen on her hands and knees, while the box had slipped out of her hands and was lying at some little distance. Tony had helped her up, and was brushing the dirt from her dress when the others got there.

"Oh, I do hope you are not hurt," said Mrs. Marsh.

"I'm not a bit hurt," said Mrs. Grover, as she straightened her hat; "I was just a bit taken aback. I came down so sudden. Something tripped me up."

"I ought to have told you not to come by the path," said Mrs. Marsh. "We had a string there to catch thieves if they came to steal grapes."

Tony explained. "You see the string is fixed so it rings a bell when you touch it."

"And now the least we can do is to give you a basket of grapes, Mrs. Grover," said Mrs. Marsh.

And so it happened that Mrs. Grover had grape jelly, that year, as well as the Marsh family. In this way they did not have any more grapes for themselves than if a large basket of them had been stolen. But it was a pleasure to give them to Mrs. Grover.

And a week later came the last day before they were going home, and Tony had a wonderful walk with Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale, which was all the better for being so unexpected. Laura had gone to play with Sally for the last time, and Aunt Laura had gone to spend the day with Mrs. Copley. So only Tony and his mother were at home when Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale called. Mr. Perry had his sketching things with him.

"I am going over to the Point to finish my sketch," he said. "I thought perhaps your sister would come with me."

"Mrs. Copley motored over this morning," said Mrs. Marsh, "and she simply carried her off, almost by force. Laura will be back for supper. You must come and have supper with us."

"I'll go to the Point with you," said Tony.

"All right, old chap, that will be great."

"You ought to wash your hands, Tony," said his mother.

"Never mind about his hands. They'll be dirtier before we get back. I was seven once."

"Did everybody make you wash your hands all the time?" Tony asked with interest.

"Everybody, always."

"You waste such a lot of time," said Tony.

"And they get dirty so quick. I think once a day is enough."

"And yet," Mr. Perry mused, "there is something very nice about well-scrubbed hands. Your mother and your aunt wouldn't look so well if they went around with dirty hands."

"Sandy never washes his paws as much as he ought," said Tony. "Aunt Laura is always saying how black his feet are. I guess Aunt Laura's shoes wouldn't look so white if she had to clean them with her tongue."

While Mr. Perry was sketching, Tony was busy sailing a tiny boat in a pool of water, for it was low tide, and there were pools among the rocks.

"I wish you good luck with your voyage, Tony," said Mr. Perry. "What is your cargo this time?"

"I hadn't thought about the cargo," said Tony. "I am just going on a cruise around the world in my sailboat."

"That is great. Won't you take me, too?"

"I'll take you and Perry Airedale."

"How about the rest of your family?"

"I'll take mother, and Laura if she'll be very good."

"And how about your Aunt Laura?"

"The boat would be too crowded," said Tony. "She'd be more comfortable to stay behind."

Tony put some grains of sand into the tiny boat. "I'm bringing home monkeys and kangaroos and lemons and oranges," he said.

Mr. Perry and Perry Airedale came to supper. They had been coming to supper very often lately. Tony did not mind bidding good-bye to Mr. Perry so much because Perry Airedale was to live with them again until Mr. Perry came back from California. And, after all, it was not quite good-bye, for Mr. Perry would come to see them in their winter home and leave Perry Airedale with them before he went to California himself.

"Don't you hate to leave the seashore, Mr. Perry?" Tony asked.

"I don't mind about the seashore. I hate to leave the people I am fond of, and go off to California."

"Yes, it will be very hard to leave Perry Airedale. But we'll be good to him."

After supper Mr. Perry asked Aunt Laura to go for a last walk with him.

“How good! Tony and I will go, too,” said Laura.

“No,” said Mrs. Marsh, “you will do nothing of the kind. I want you both to go to bed early.”

“But it is Mr. Perry’s last evening,” said little Laura.

“Yes,” said Tony, “and he promised to write some verses for me about the gulls.”

“So I did. I will make up some verses for you before we go on the walk. How will that do?” And he scribbled off these lines:

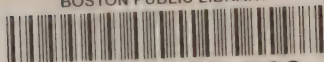
I’d like to be a flying gull,
So white against the sky.
For life I’m sure is never dull,
If one can only fly.

And yet how fares the flying gull,
When falls the winter snow?
With books and toys I am not dull
Before the fireside’s glow.

Good-bye, blue sky and bluer sea,
And gulls and sand and rocks.
At home my playmates wait for me
With paints and toys and blocks.

THE END

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